

## THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

### "Grace Dispensation"

Ephesians 3:1-6

#### Introduction

1. Here is a new start. Not exactly, for the chapter commences with a link (cf. 2:19-22). "For this cause" may in fact have been the start of his prayer (vv. 14-21).

2. But Paul is diverted. He is the "prisoner" of the Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of the Gentiles. How this came about is explained (vv. 1-13). After that, he turns to his prayer (vv. 14-21). So, as an imprisoned servant of God, Paul writes.

#### 1. DISPENSATION--GIVEN v. 2.

##### a. Assumed

The conditional clause is assumed to be true (1st class condition), hence rendered "since." They had heard and did know.

##### b. Named

What is labeled is "the dispensation of the grace of God." A dispensation is a "stewardship." It means "the law of the house," the way to regulate it. Hence, management. We believe God has seven ways to regulate His household (innocency, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, kingdom). This is one of the seven and introduces it as new at this point. At no other point of time was God's grace a dispensation than now.

##### c. Related

Paul was the man God used to receive the dispensation which relates to Gentiles (cf. v. 1). The priority of Paul in this matter cannot be contested. "Given me" is as forceful as can be. This was a distinctive responsibility of Paul's ministry. That the dispensation accents Gentiles is noted by "you-ward."

#### 2. DISPENSATION--RECEIVED vv. 3-5.

##### a. By revelation v. 3

Revelation is the doctrine which avers that information not otherwise available is given by God. Paul had

already informed the Ephesians about this. There is no extant record of this apparently "lost" letter by Paul.

b. By mystery v. 4

This word does not mean something mysterious, but discoverable by revelation. It is known to those who are initiated. God has revealed several mysteries in His Word (Christ, 1 Tim. 3:16; Rapture, 1 Cor. 15:51; Church, Eph. 5:32; Indwelling of Christ, Col. 1:27; Babylon, Rev. 17, 18). By reading his epistle, Paul says they will grasp his knowledge of the mystery.

c. By mediation v. 5

While Paul is primary in this dispensation, others shared: "apostles and prophets." The order here shows New Testament prophets are meant. Note there is no knowledge, but "by the Spirit" (cf. John 16:12-15). Moreover, in all previous dispensations, this present information was not made known. This is the significance of "in other ages" (cf. Rom. 16:25, 26; Col. 1:25, 26). It is true that the Old Testament teaches Gentile salvation, but it does not teach the "mystery of Christ."

3. DISPENSATION--EXPLAINED v. 6.

The import of the change which has taken place in this dispensation is conveyed by three Greek words, each with the prefix sun, which means equals, partners, together. It connotes on the same footing, neither being inferior or superior to the other. So Gentiles and Jews are:

a. Fellow Heirs God the Father

God the Father has made Jews and Gentiles alike His children through His Son Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 3:26).

b. Fellow Members God the Son

Here the Son is dominant. In the one body both Jews and Gentiles are animated by the new life imparted (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

c. Fellow Partakers God the Spirit

The promise relates to the Holy Spirit. Hence both Jews and Gentiles partake of those promises given to share the glory of the Head and be where He is.

Conclusion All the new innovations of this dispensation of grace have come "in Christ" and "by the Gospel" (v. 6). Thanks be unto God for this marvelous provision.