

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"Manifold Wisdom of God"

Ephesians 3:8-12

Introduction

1. This is the dispensation of grace. It was mediated to us by Paul (vv. 2-5). God kept this as His top secret until Paul was given it (vv. 3, 5).
2. In this dispensation Jews and Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-partakers (3:6). It is a glorious work of God.
3. Paul was assigned the ministry to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:8) and also the preaching of grace dispensation (v. 2) truth (v. 7). In preaching these "unsearchable riches," other blessed emphases are given:

1. THE MYSTERY v. 9.

- a. Illuminated

The mystery is first a revelation (v. 3), but here it is lightened. Paul's charge is to see that "all men" get into enlightenment concerning the grace "mystery." The word "fellowship" is certainly "dispensation" in Greek. Therefore dispensational teaching is a specific purpose of God!

- b. Suppressed

Forcefully Paul notes that this mystery dispensation was hidden "in our God" from the ages (Heb. 11:3). There is no way that Old Testament saints knew about this. To support this, Paul notes God is the creator of all things ("the" all things in Greek). It is unthinkable for Paul to consider the total universe, including dispensations, apart from God's creative power.

2. THE POWERS v. 10.

- a. Named

- 1) Principalities. These are beings created by God to govern (1:21; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15).

- 2) Powers. These are beings created by God to exercise authority (1:21 "power," John 1:12).

Probably good and evil beings are to be construed here. Clearly angelic beings are interested in human redemption (1 Pet. 1:12). "Heavenlies" is used frequently in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 6:12).

- b. Informed

This is part of a final clause. Not only are "men" (indefinite pronoun) to be enlightened (v. 9), but angelic beings are to be caused to know the mystery. "Now" refers

to the present age as opposed to long ages of silence.

c. Explained

1) What? Not God's power nor love, but His wisdom is the issue. His wisdom is variegated or many colored (Greek only used this once in New Testament). There is infinite beauty and design in His wisdom. Angels had seen God's creative power, but now they are dazzled by the rapture and brightness of its wisdom.

2) How? The special instrument of instruction to angels is the "church." When God unites hostile sections of mankind in one body, that is an obvious proof of His versatile wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). The church is on center stage to display God's wisdom.

3. THE PURPOSE v. 11.

a. It is singular

Here the single purpose of God is linked with the grace dispensation. The standard by which God's variegated wisdom is judged is His eternal purpose. This is that determined will of God by which all things subsist (cf. 1:5, 9, 11). Of all the possible plans for the universe which an infinite God could devise, this is the best.

b. It is personal

The central figure in God's single purpose is Christ. Christology, therefore, is the prime concern of the Father. It is He who is the single thread from Genesis to Revelation. No wonder the Spirit exalts Christ (John 16:14, 15). The mention of Christ presents the aspect of prayer in which His own may say anything to the Father. But it is mediated "in Christ." The verb "have" is present, hence a constant privilege is indicated. This is possible through our faith in Him (objective genitive). Note the three aspects of prayer:

- 1) Boldness. This is freedom of speech.
- 2) Access. This is approach to God (2:18).
- 3) Confidence. This is assurance of acceptance.

Conclusion "Wherefore" (v. 13) refers back to vv. 1-12. The Ephesians were not to lose heart for Gentile evangelization. Paul's imprisonment did not mean God's Word was bound nor that God's purpose was frustrated. His afflictions did not mean he was out of God's will, rather, they were the direct consequence of his obedience to and involvement with God's eternal purpose. He appeals for them to glory in his afflictions and that God's purpose of grace was moving forward. Hallelujah!