

# THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

## Lesson 10

### *Chapter 3:1-5, The Study*

#### *The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret*

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### REVIEW

Our last lesson concerned chapter 2. We looked at four specific areas that the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church.

**First**, we looked at **The Temple** (the Temple of Christ's Church) **Architecture**. We found that the three "raw materials" God used in the building of His Temple were 1 – Spiritually dead people, 2 – Spiritually disobedient people, and 3 – Spiritual desirous people.

**Second, The "reproduction work"** (Christ – The Church). Again, Paul listed three areas of major importance. 1 - The Contractor is God who works out of His wealth and power. 2 – The Construction is great (elevating and excelling), and 3 – The work is guaranteed (guaranteed by grace, not to be by any human works, and establishing a new creation.

**Third, The "Temple appointments."** Out with the old covenant ceremonial laws, and covenant aspects, and in with the New. And then Paul goes on to describe the New covenantal aspects. Christ has become the direct mediator for all. There are no longer Jews and Gentiles in the plan – only all people as a single grouping. The plan covers the available forgiveness of all humans. Those who "believe" become one new Body in Christ. The revelation that in the pre-Christ's death times the Jews (Hebrews) were "near" to God and the Gentiles were "far" from God. Now In-Christ, peace has been proclaimed and all mankind is forgiven and has the

opportunity to choose God in Christ and become "Near." Those who choose "not Christ" will become not just "far" but "lost." And last in this section revealed that those who are In Christ, have the indwelling Spirit of God and have "perpetual access" to God the Father.

**Fourth**, and the last section of Chapter 2 (19-22) describes our (the Believer's) **New Temple appearance. 1 - It is Secure.** The members of the Body of Christ are no longer "strangers or outsiders." We are now immediately members of the family of God. 2 – This new body is **built up from the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the head cornerstone.** 3 – This new body **will keep on growing... into a Holy Temple in the Lord.** And 4 – Here's the last verse of Chapter 2:

***You too,  
in Christ,  
are being built together  
into a dwelling of God  
by the Spirit.***

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## **Our Outline of Lesson 10:**

### **III. CHAPTER THREE - The Church As God's Top Secret**

#### **A. The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret 3:1-5**

1. The Description is Related to a Special People 3:1
  2. The Description is Related to a Special Dispensation 3:2
  3. The Description is Related to a Special Revelation 3:3
  4. The Description is Related to Christ's Special Secret 3:4
  5. The Description is Related to the Spirit's Contemporary Ministry 3:5
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**III. CHAPTER THREE - The Church As God's Top Secret**  
**A – The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret**  
**3:1-5**

**1. Ephesians 3:1 "The Description is related to a Special People"**

**THE STUDY**

**(3:1 Mac)**

*By reason*

*of this **new creation***

*I, Paul, am the **prisoner** of Christ Jesus*

***for the benefit of you** Gentiles.*

**(3:1 NASB)**

*For this reason*

*I, Paul,*

*the prisoner*

*of Christ Jesus*

*for the sake of you Gentiles*

**COMMENTARY**

Prepositions are our friends... Paul begins this section with "By reason of," or "For this reason" in the NASB." The "For" and "by" introduce us to a continuation of the previous conversation with a following result. An example: "I bought aspirin, "for" or "by reason of," I had a headache.

Paul uses these prepositions to refer back to the "What You Have" part of the book (Chapters 1 & 2). If we were to look back at that section, we would find a list of **five** things. **First**, you have the **blessing** of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. **Second**, you have the **expectations** that Paul indicated as he prayed for you. **Third**, you are the **benefactor** of the workings of God's might. **Fourth**, God has brought you **Salvation** in His Son. **Fifth**, God has brought you into a cross-

cultural **unity** where the believing people of the **covenant** are united with the believing people of the **world**.

Paul next introduces himself as "the **prisoner** of Christ Jesus." He considers himself "in-chains," (Gk desmois, in chains) as the prisoner of Christ Jesus. Paul considers himself to be **absolutely under the mandate** to bring testimony of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. He has no other choice but to follow this new vocation placed upon him by the Lord Jesus Himself. He is a "Prisoner of Christ Jesus." He is **unable** to follow his own path, chained to Christ, he must follow the path of Jesus.

"For the sake of you Gentiles" is Paul's next phrase and it would be better translated as "For the benefit of **the Nations** (Gk *ethnos*, nations). Why was Paul a chained prisoner of Christ Jesus? Because what He (First Christ then Paul) would **say and do** was for the **direct benefit of all** the peoples of the world. We can't change the past; however, we can conjecture about it. What if God did not call Paul, or someone like him, to explain the plan of God for the world - to the world. If they are to be included in the plan of God, then they need to **know** that plan and the particulars concerning the available **salvation** and continuing personal righteous **relationship** with God that they can have through **belief in the Son of God**. Romans 10:14-15 brings clarity to this question,

*"14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!""*

But God did call Paul to institute this revelation concerning the "Mystery" of the Body of Christ - among the Gentiles. The Mystery designed and made in the **Eternal past**... but kept **secret** until revealed to Paul and the other apostles.

**III. CHAPTER THREE - The Church As God's Top Secret**  
**A – The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret**  
**3:1-5**

1. Ephesians 3:1 "The Description is related to a Special People"
2. **Ephesians 3:2 "The Description is related to a Special Dispensation"**

**THE STUDY**

**(3:2 Mac)**

**You**

certainly have heard  
 about the **dispensation** springing from  
 the **grace of God** that was **given** to  
**me** with  
**you** in mind.

**(3:2 NASB)**

**if** indeed

**you**

have heard of the **stewardship**  
 of **God's grace**  
 which was **given**  
 to **me**  
 for **you**;

I really like MacCorkle's introduction – "You **certainly** have heard. He knows that the Ephesians church "certainly" knows all about **Paul and his calling by the Lord Jesus Himself**. The NASB starts with "If indeed," which may be better translated as "Since indeed," for the testimony of Paul's **calling, salvation, and ministry** were well known by the readers of his letters. That's the very point of his saying this, his readers know fully well of the "Dispensation," "stewardship," or administration, which is the **burden** of bringing the Gospel **to the Gentiles**. He speaks of it in every letter he writes, he obviously preached it everywhere

he went. It is not that he was possessed with his own self-importance, but that he was **bound** to that message by "**the chains of Christ Jesus.**"

"**The grace** which was **given** to me for you," is such a marvelous statement. How very much like our God, once you get to know Him, everything He **gives** to us is for **giving away** to others - that they might **know Him**. He is the God of revelation, He WANTS us to know Him and His plan - **through** His Son, **by** His Holy Spirit - **in order to** draw together **a body of perfect unity in Christ Jesus - that we might be His possession forever.**

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**III. CHAPTER THREE - The Church As God's Top Secret**  
**A – The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret**  
**3:1-5**

1. Ephesians 3:1 "The Description is related to a Special People"
2. Ephesians 3:2 "The Description is related to a Special Dispensation"
3. **Ephesians 3:3 "The Description is related to a Special Revelation"**

**THE STUDY**

**(3:3 Mac)**

That this **secret**  
 was **made known**  
 to **me**  
 by **revelation**  
 as I wrote briefly above.

**(3:3 NASB)**

that by **revelation**  
 there was made known  
 to **me**  
 the **mystery,**  
 as I wrote before in brief.

**COMMENTARY**

Jesus reveals His plan to Paul and equips him with the necessary information for carrying out that plan. Something entirely new is being revealed and Jesus chooses Paul to begin this work. In order to institute a "new plan" of God a new period of time is introduced to the world. Like each of the divisions of time we have studied, it will begin with new revelation that will set-up and define it. Biblical scholars' sometimes use the word "dispensation" to describe these various time periods. I like the term "administration" as we are more familiar with our American government system of marking time on the grand scale using this

same word. We mark our political timeline with presidential administrations - a four year period.

We've discussed various administrations in the Bible and each has an administrator (with the Jews, it is the High Priest), and a political system of government that cascades down (From the King, Caesar, President) to the ordinary people (much like our own government).

God placed evidence **in the Old Testament** of the importance of the Gentile world in His eternal plan.

### **Psalm 18:49**

*Therefore, I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing the praises of Your name.*

### **Deuteronomy 32:43**

*Rejoice, you nations, with His people for He will avenge the blood of his servants; He will take vengeance on His enemies and make atonement for His land and people.*

### **Psalm 117:1-2**

*Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol Him, all you peoples. For great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever, Praise the Lord.*

### **Isaiah 9:1-2**

*Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the **future**, He will honor Galilee of the nations, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

This new administration, spoken of by Paul, literally springs forth from the mouth of God, as it is largely unforeseen in the Old Testament. **Evidence** can be found there, but God had chosen not to **fully reveal** His plan for this future in His past

administrations on earth. The motivation for this "springing forth" revelation is **the very grace of God** reaching out to **the whole world** with **equality**. God's special program for the nation of Israel has been set aside for this administration as He calls forth a **"People for Himself."**

Paul mentions that he has written of this mystery before, and we can find that in 1 Corinthians 2:7-12

*"7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 **the wisdom** which **none** of the rulers of this age has understood; for **if** they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but just as it is written,*

**"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."**

*10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,**"*

Paul makes it clear that this new administration of time has **not** been introduced by God to fix some problem He had not foreseen. God's plan for all the ages has been formulated **before the foundations of the world** and all its creation. He has allowed **glimpses** of His plan but has chosen to only **fully reveal this age ... following His Son's work on the cross.**

**III. CHAPTER THREE - The Church As God's Top Secret**  
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1. Ephesians 3:1 "The Description is related to a Special People"
2. Ephesians 3:2 "The Description is related to a Special Dispensation"
3. Ephesians 3:3 "The Description is related to a Special Revelation"
4. **Ephesians 3:4 "The Description is related to Christ's Special Secret"**

**THE STUDY**

**(3:4 Mac)**

So

**when**

**you** read it

**you** can perceive

my insight into

**Christ's special secret.**

**(3:4 NASB)**

By referring to this,

when

**you** read

**you** can understand

my insight

into **the mystery of Christ,**

**COMMENTARY**

Paul anticipates the Ephesian **concerns** as they read his letter. I can almost hear the members of the Church at Ephesus, "Paul, How come **you** know so much about this new revelation about this new age?"

His answer (written before they asked) is concise and brilliant and in two parts.

**Part-1**, go back and re-read my letter from the beginning and consider all the details - that **you** might **know** them (The word Paul uses for "when you read," uses the verb "**to read aloud**").

**Part-2**, Paul gives them this answer: "**Because God revealed it to me!**" Apparently, the Ephesians would **find Paul annoying** when he could answer every question they dreamed up to ask about this new age. He pre-thinks them and includes answers **before they ask**.

Paul also brings clarity to this new gathering of "those who would believe," by calling them "**The Mystery of Christ.**" This new age is not about **us** - it is about **the Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Glory of The Father**.

### **John 17:6-10**

*6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.*

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### III. CHAPTER THREE - The Church As God's Top Secret

#### A – The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret

#### 3:1-5

1. Ephesians 3:1 "The Description is related to a Special People"
2. Ephesians 3:2 "The Description is related to a Special Dispensation"
3. Ephesians 3:3 "The Description is related to a Special Revelation"
4. Ephesians 3:4 "The Description is related to Christ's Special Secret"
5. **Ephesians 3:5 "The Description is related to The Spirit's Contemporary Ministry"**

#### THE STUDY

##### (3:5 Mac)

This **secret** was

**not** made known to the sons of men  
**in** other generations,  
 as it has been **revealed**  
 by the Spirit just now,  
**in** this generation,  
**to** His set apart apostles and prophets.

##### (3:5 NASB)

which

in other generations  
 (this secret) was **not** made known to **the sons of men**,  
 as it has **now been revealed** to His holy **apostles and prophets**  
 in the Spirit;

#### COMMENTARY

Each of the apostles were confronted, as Jews, with the revelation of The Body of Christ. Each had to wrestle with God's focus **upon the Gentiles**. Each had to come to the **conclusion** that God had

called out a **brand-new assembly of people** who would, of **their own free will**, choose **Jesus the Christ as their own personal God**. What a wonderful work of **grace** for **God the Father** to take these very powerful men and reveal this new age and its purposes to them. **Each of them** would receive God's revelation concerning this and recognize that **this new Body of Christ was the Work of God**.

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**HOMEWORK:  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – 3:1-5**

**Look at the question and ignore the answer. Then study the answer!**

**(3:1 Mac) “The Description is related to a Special People”**

*By reason*

*of this **new creation***

*I, Paul, am the **prisoner** of Christ Jesus  
**for the benefit of you** Gentiles.*

**1. Why has Paul been called to be a Prisoner of Christ Jesus?**

Paul was called directly and immediately by Jesus Christ Himself so that Paul could be educated on the New Covenant guidelines for Faith in Christ Himself. This “revelation” would then be directed to Paul as his particular ministry to the Gentiles (the whole of the world) and this would also include the Jews. This new ministry would result in a new assembly of world wide believers (both Jew and Gentile) known as “the Body of Christ.”

**2. Why is this new revelation so important to “you Gentiles?”**

From the beginning (back before creation of anything) God wanted a human people to become His immediate family members. He chose earth to be the home of that people. Here, the people of the world would be put into a situation where they would have to choose “our Almighty God, or not God Him.” His purpose would be to gather those who would believe in Him as their God and believe in His human born Son as the path to that salvation. They would have to respond positively to His Holy Spirit in order to make that choice. From the beginning mankind was given the opportunity to make a choice based upon the revelation of God in their times. The offer was to the whole world. Every

human being ever born would be given enough revelation to come to a conclusion – either Yes Almighty God, or no Almighty God. His family would be populated only with the “Yes” believers who by Faith would listen to His Holy Spirit and choose Him. The Gentiles of the Bible make up all of the population of the world with the exception of the Hebrew people, later known as the Jew. They were placed under a voluntary covenant – and chose, largely, not God – and many still do.

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### **(3:2 Mac) “The Description is related to a Special Dispensation”**

**You**

*certainly have heard  
about the **dispensation** springing from  
the **grace of God** that was **given** to  
**me** with  
**you** in mind.*

#### **1. What is Paul reminding the Ephesian church about here?**

Paul reminds them about all of his previous visits and the letters he has sent their way. The content of his messages includes the starting up by God of a “New dispensation,” a new age, separate and distinct from the age of the old covenants that God had made with the Hebrew people, now known as the Jews. He’s reminding them that this new age is by The Grace of God – it is a gift from Him – and that the Ephesian believers, as well as all new believers, are included in God’s Gracious New Gift of Salvation.

#### **2. What does Paul mean when he states that “The grace of God that was given to me with you in mind?”**

We need to consider Paul’s background. The Apostle Paul was likely born between 5 BC and 5 AD in Tarsus, a major city in Asia Minor (now in Turkey).

Paul was a Roman citizen by birth. He was a Jew whose Jewish name was Saul, and he was educated in Jerusalem under the famous teacher Gamaliel. Paul was a zealous Pharisee who persecuted and had Christians killed - until he had a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus, which converted him to Christianity.

Given this dramatic complete conversion, it should be seen that he was the perfect choice to bring a new generation of people to God and Christ – especially those from around the world as instructed by God’s Holy Spirit. He became a “zealous” Christian with amazing enablement from God’s Holy Spirit. Without Paul (in human terms), it is probable the worldwide Church may never have come to pass.

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### **(3:3 Mac) “The Description is related to a Special Revelation”**

That this **secret**  
 was **made known**  
 to **me**  
 by **revelation**  
 as I wrote briefly above.

#### **1. What was the important “Secret” revelation?**

The specialness of Paul’s message concerning the “secret” is the fact that the Love of God for all of mankind was finally revealed through the substitutionary sacrifice, forecasted throughout the Old Testament, of the very Son of God in human form. It was revealed to Paul, after the fact, and it immediately changed his entire life. Paul then became “a bondservant” of His Lord Jesus Christ. It became his special ministry of life to reveal and teach about this new assembly of believing human beings who would receive eternal life and forgiveness – simply by believing by faith the essential facts. The essential facts, quoted by the Jewish Sheema, required the individual to Love God, in your heart, mind,

and soul. Further revealed in making that love through Jesus, the Christ, through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

## **2. What did Paul write "Briefly above" in this letter?**

Chapters 1 and 2 summarize all the benefits that were revealed to Paul at and following his visit by the post-ascended Son of God. A brief summary of Paul's conversion can be found in Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-31.

### **(3:4 Mac) "The Description is related to Christ's Special Secret"**

So

**when**

**you** read it

**you** can perceive

my insight into

**Christ's special secret.**

## **1. What document is Paul referencing that the Ephesians need to "read and perceive?"**

The Contents of Chapters 1 & 2 of His letter to the Ephesians.

These first two chapters can be remembered as the **"What You Have in Believing in Jesus Christ as your substitute sacrifice at the cross of Calvary."** That sacrifice began the making of a new "set-apart people," who were neither Jew nor Gentile. They were instead a separate grouping of humans, filled with the Spirit of God and made members of the family and household of God. Paul basically says, "If you don't understand where I'm going with this letter – go back and re-read the pages that come before this point in the text."

### **(3:5 Mac) “The Description is related to The Spirit’s Contemporary Ministry”**

This **secret** was  
**not** made known to the sons of men  
**in** other generations,  
 as it has been **revealed**  
 by the Spirit just now,  
**in** this generation,  
**to** His set apart apostles and prophets.

#### **1. What Special Revelation is Paul writing about?**

Paul tells the Ephesians that the Holy Spirit’s ministry amongst both the Jews (Hebrews) and the rest of the world has remarkably changed. Previously God’s plan was for the nation of Israel to become the leader of all the world to bring people to God and win them. The Holy Spirit of God would then leave them and move on. Their destinations were, 1 – as lovers of God, The Bosom of Abraham; 2 – as disobedient non-believers, The Place of the Dead. Their eternal destinations would be assigned at the Day of Judgement.

With the completion of God’s plan for redemption through the death of His Son Jesus. Those who would believe that this was accomplished and completed in Jesus, whether they were Jew or Gentile (any other race of people in the world), the Holy Spirit would come upon them and attempt to convince them, and if they would believe, the Holy Spirit of God would take residence (indwell) in their physical bodies, and show them continuing revelation of the things in God’s revealed word. If they would not believe, the Holy Spirit would leave them.

#### **2. What does the last line of the verse mean?**

The setting apart of the apostles and prophets indicates that through the Holy Spirit’s work believers would realize that the apostles and prophets were true and worthy, and their teachings were the truth.

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Jeremiah 18:15

**"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path."**

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