



CITY TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Preacher: Rev Glenn Brodie

Date: Sunday AM, 28 September 2025

Scriptures: [Ephesians 3:1-13](#)

Title: “God’s Mystery Revealed in the Church”

Translated to *(from English speaker)*: English

Voice-to-Text AI transcription from Church Sermon recording.

Well folks, before we have a look at what the Lord has to say through His Word, let's ask for His blessing and illumination, shall we? Now Father, we do thank You for Your Word. We want to thank You, Lord, that it is our priceless treasure, and we want to thank You there's so much in Christ still to learn, but there is much, O God, in Your Word, O God, that You've given to us about who Jesus is, and all that He is and will be for us. So make it plain to us, we pray this morning, this rich passage that You've given us, Lord, to consider, to digest, and to obey, in Jesus' name.

Amen. If you were to mention the word mystery in 2025, most of us would associate that word with something that's unsolved, and so we think of murder mysteries particularly, and Poirot seems to be the one that we watch a lot, Miss Marples, and others there, and you may watch the same. The mystery of what happened to that plane, MH370, that vanished.

We don't know for sure, all sorts of theories, but it's a mystery, something that needs to be solved. But in Paul's day, mystery meant something quite different. In particular, in Ephesus and other like-minded cities, which were a real whirlpool, a hot pot of religions, you had

what was called the mystery or secret religions, and in particular, the major mystery religion in Paul's day was the Eleusis cult.

It was centred on the worship of the goddess Demeter, D-E-M-E-T-E-R, Demeter. She was the goddess of harvests and of eternal rebirth and life. It is said that she lost her daughter, kidnapped by Hades, taken to the underworld, and she spent nine days looking for her lost daughter.

And so, now that she was found and had a rebirth from Hades, so to speak, they had a festival every year in her honour. Coincidentally, about this time every year, late September and beginning of October. And if you wanted to be a candidate for the secrets of Demeter, then you would start on a nine-day festival where you would walk from Athens, 24 kilometres to the little town of Eleusis, and you would go through some sacrifices.

You would have ritual cleansings, a baptism of sorts for them. You would go through sacrifices and other fastings and this sort of thing, and then you were ready on the ninth day to be, as a candidate, inducted into the secrets of Demeter. But it was only for the candidates, and the priesthood of Demeter would initiate them into whatever the mysteries were.

We don't know what they were because it was a capital offence for the candidate to divulge what those secrets or the mystery of Demeter was. You would lose your life. So we don't know what these mysteries actually were.

The tenth day, you then walked back as a follower of Demeter, back to Athens. And so you just had this whirlpool of different mystery religions. Demeter, by far and away, the most popular and the biggest.

You've got some of those going around today as well. Freemasonry has its secret rituals and rites and so on, and the candidates are to know the secrets of Freemasonry. And they have a baptism into the death and the life of Hiram, Abiff, and so on.

And then they give a sort of, well, I invite a gruesome death if I divulge the secrets of Freemasonry. That's if you go to the third level. So you even have these sort of things happening today, these mystery cults.

Well, four times in this passage we have the term mystery, secrets. But it means rather something different to the mystery cults that surrounded Paul's day. And it's always good to know that when Paul went preaching, or any of the apostles for that matter, they never preached into a philosophical or religious vacuum.

It's important to know the background that here with this melting pot of temples that we looked at last week, and mystery religions, in comes this Roman Jew from Tarsus, and he is preaching a gospel, and he writes a letter to one of the central religious hotbeds is Ephesus, and he too talks about mystery. But it will have a slightly different meaning. Six times in Ephesians, four in this particular passage, is that term used.

Twenty-seven times in the New Testament, four of them in Revelation, and Paul uses twenty of them, and we'll look at the other three shortly. But Ephesians is by far and away the book of the New Testament that talks about mystery, and rightly so given the epicentre of it in Ephesus. And Paul deliberately wants his readers to see that God and the gospel have mysteries or truths that are very much something that you can put your life on, as opposed to the myths that some of these Gentile non-Jew believers would have come from.

They would readily understand a mystery religion because some of them were part of it, but now they are under the mysteries of God, and this is something different. Now a biblical mystery is something of God's hidden counsel, his secret wisdom only known to him

that he reveals, and can only be known if he reveals that, by his Spirit to someone. And that's what Paul is saying here.

If you have a look, keep your Bible open, we'll need to look at this passage today. He says, surely you've heard in verse two about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I've already written briefly. And verse five, it was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

So this was something in God's timing, in his secret wisdom, that no one knew until the Holy Spirit at the appointed time chose to reveal these things to the Apostle Paul. In other words, this was not a mystery that he gleaned from some hard hours of studying the Old Testament. He wasn't going through Isaiah and suddenly had an aha moment and said, got it, the Jews and Gentiles are going to be formed into one body.

No, there were glimpses of this, because that's what he says this particular mystery is. Look at verse six, this mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together, sharers together in the promise in Jesus Christ. So in other words, whilst there were glimpses in the Old Testament, like Isaiah for example, that Israel will be a light to shine to the Gentiles, and we looked at a couple of weeks ago the temple complex, you had the court of the Gentiles and Jesus said, my house shall be a house of prayer for all nations.

But even though that there was a witness to the Gentiles, this business that they would be full participants in the kingdom of God along with the Jews was something that was just beyond our ability to discern from the Old Testament. God had to reveal that by His Spirit and that's what Paul is saying here. Now this mystery particularly is part of the larger mystery that we saw way back in chapter one.

If you look at verse nine and ten, for instance there, in chapter one Paul says, and he made known to us the mystery of his will, this is the first time he talks about it, to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment. Now here's the mystery, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. So in chapter three where he's talking about sharers together, that we are members together, that we are heirs together, this unity of togetherness is a subset of a greater unity that God is bringing between heaven and earth.

Because heaven and earth at the moment are at war with one another. We are in disunity because of our sin and God's hatred of sin. And so there is disunity in terms of heaven and earth, there is disunity between the nations, there is disunity between mankind and nature.

You see that with the curse on this earth, both in nature and in terms of the atmosphere and everything else that happens. And God is going to bring out of all of this chaos and judgment, he is going to bring a unity where we see that trajectory reach its fulfilment in Revelation chapters 21 and 22, where God or the angel said, now the dwelling place of God is with man. So that's where the mystery is heading.

As the church then, we play our part in demonstrating to our culture that the gospel end goal is about a reunification of heaven with earth. That's why unity is such an issue within the church and why we looked at a couple of weeks ago that the only bloodline that matters is that you are born again in the blood of Christ. Well, there are two things that I want you to see this morning.

What does this mystery have to do with us in 2025 and what does God want to impress there? Two things I want to share. The first is this, is that God's mysteries can be known and they can therefore be trusted. The essence of the mystery religions was the so-called deep truths could only be known by the candidates, the followers, the devotees to Demeter on pain of death if you broadcasted what those mysteries were.

So therefore there was no information for anyone about the Demeter mysteries. However, God is precisely the opposite. God has his secrets, his counsel and when he reveals that he wants that made known.

So that's a secret no more. If you look in chapter 3 again, look at verses 8 and 9. Paul says, although I'm the least of all God's people, this grace was given to me. Here's the grace, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery which for ages past was kept hidden in God who created all things.

So Paul understood that these mysteries once revealed were to be made known and to be a secret no more. What is insightful along with the word mystery is you find the word revelation. You see it there in verse 3, this mystery was made known to me by revelation.

There's a few words in Greek that they use in the scriptures for revelation. This one is apocalypsis, where we get apocalyptic. Normally when we think of apocalyptic we think of the end of the world but the word apocalypsis simply means to reveal that which is hidden.

It's as though God has pulled the curtain back and Paul and certainly John in revelation, that is all apocalypsis and that's how revelation starts, the apocalypsis of Jesus Christ from God. It is that which was hidden that is now revealed and that's why there's so much of in revelation about what's happening in heaven, that we just would not know unless God revealed that. A little while ago we sang the song God is the God, the revealer of mysteries.

Where does that come from? Daniel chapter 2, remember we did Daniel a couple of years ago and in Daniel chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar got that dream that troubled him so much that he got all his wise men and magicians to come and he said, I've had a troubling dream and I'm not going to tell you what the dream is, you're going to tell it for me and you're

going to give me the interpretation and if you don't I'll kill the lot of you. What a happy morning that would have been! Daniel hears this as well as his three friends and he says look to the guard there, he says look just give me overnight, I'll seek God and hopefully I'll have something for Nebuchadnezzar. Well God reveals what that dream was and the interpretation and Daniel goes to Nebuchadnezzar and he says these words, he says, no wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery that he has asked but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come and it's that enormous statue, remember the head of gold being Babylon, the chest of silver being Persia, the belly and thighs are bronze being the Greeks and then the legs and feet of iron and partly baked clay with the feet as well, looking at the Roman Empire that would come and then a rock that was not cut by human hands, remember, comes and knocks over the statue and grows to be a mountain that covers the whole world being the coming kingdom of Jesus.

No way could anyone come to any sort of conclusion, A, what the dream was and B, what it meant unless God revealed, pulled the curtain back and revealed that which was hidden and that happened to Daniel quite a bit in his book. So God wants to be known, he is the revealer of mysteries, he doesn't want it kept hidden on pain of death but he wants people to see and to know him and therefore also to trust him. It's not enough just to know the truths of God, they need to be acted upon, a life surrendered so that you can walk in his ways.

One of the great convictions we have about the Scriptures is the truthfulness of the Scriptures. If you're into your big words, infallibility is the theological word for that. I don't know what that'll get you on Scrabble but you could have a go.

The author of Scripture, well we've got 40 different human authors, Paul being one of them but the author overseeing it all is the Holy Spirit and that's what Paul is doing here. The Holy Spirit revealed to me these mysteries and now they become Scripture. So it's not just

God wants to be revealed, he wants to be trusted as well and the Holy Spirit, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is critical to our understanding that this is a living word, not just an empty religious text like all the others that are around.

The Apostle Peter had something to say about the Holy Spirit's work there, he said, "'Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things, for prophecy never had its origin in the human will but prophets though human spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.'" In verse 19 he talks about, and we were witnesses to, of what Jesus had to say, the Son of God. At the Mount of Transfiguration we heard God Almighty, the Father, talking. We were there, we heard God speaking and it still speaks today.

The divine inspiration of Scripture ensures that the Bible is God-breathed, it's His breath and what is interesting both in the Old Testament, the Hebrew ruach, and in the New Testament, the Greek word both mean spirit or breath and God's breath is His Spirit and this is His breath, spirit revelation for us about who God is and what He has done and will do. That is why we can stake our eternity on the Scriptures because they are truthful. It is not something made up by old men as is often our culture's rebuttal about why would you put your life on the teachings of the Bible? It is revealed by the Holy Spirit, the deep things of God and therefore they can be trusted.

That is why, for instance, you have bookended in this passage, verse 1 and verse 13. What's Paul doing? He is the preacher of these mysteries and he is in prison for it. Look at verse 1, for this reason I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles and then unlike a man he gets distracted and the next 12 verses are all one sentence again, okay, it's all one sentence in the Greek and he finishes in verse 13, I ask you therefore not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you which are your glory.

Now he's in house arrest in Rome, he's appealed to Caesar and he is doing this because the Jews are trying to chase him and want to get rid of him. So he's appealed to Caesar but in reality he is there precisely because he is preaching the mysteries of Christ, the unsearchable riches of Christ as he calls it in verse 8. So Paul is fine in suffering for his faith. I can do this because I know the truthfulness of what God has revealed to me by his Spirit and so I can hand my life over to Christ knowing I cannot lose that which he will give to me by his grace in glory and that is why we can confidently lay down our life for Jesus, that we're not being fools when we read the Scriptures and we put our lives in the Lord Jesus' hands and say make me what you will for your kingdom and for your glory, that we have a living hope because we take the truthfulness of the Bible seriously of not only what Jesus said he will do for us now but even more greatly when he comes again and we shall see him face to face.

God's secrets, his Word can be trusted because they are his revealings of himself to us so that we can know and worship him. So God's mysteries are there for everyone to see and to read and to know and that he be trusted because they are his mysteries, his Word. Secondly and final point is the privilege of knowing God's mysteries, the privilege of knowing God's mysteries.

An interesting thing about this passage is that it is one of those where Paul I guess discloses his sense of self-understanding as a preacher. There's a lot about this, this is why he digresses, he's about to go into the prayer on verse 14 through to the end of chapter 3 and Michael will preach that to us next week but Paul suddenly diverts after verse 1 and wants to make sure that they understand Paul's role to them as their apostle, as their preacher and as scripture writer. He says, surely you've heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you and it's an interesting way that he talks about it.

He doesn't say surely you heard how I was called to be a preacher to you, no he talks about I'm an administrator, literally the word is household manager of God's grace and

particularly God's grace here is the mystery that he has revealed by his Spirit. I am a steward of what God has revealed to me because it's not for me only, it is for you and he takes seriously this administration, the privilege that he has. Look at verse 8 and 9 he says, although I am less than the least of all God's people this grace was given me to preach to the Gentiles.

Now why would he say that? Because Paul used to be Saul the Pharisee who persecuted the church and got letters from the chief priests so that he could murder Christians, have them killed, have them imprisoned and so on and that's what he was going to do as he headed towards Damascus when the Lord broke in to his life and he fell off his horse did Saul and got converted there and became the Apostle Paul. The expectation from God then is that he will take this the least of all and make him into the one through whom his secrets would be revealed and Paul says this is a great stewardship that I have to make plain to everyone, verse 9, the administration of this mystery which people in the past didn't know about but we do now. Here's the privilege, there were others who longed to look into these things but couldn't because God had locked it up in his own counsel until the timing that suited him and now Paul has the blessing and the privilege and it is a privilege to preach the Word of God because we're not talking about common things, we're talking about the very deep heart issues of God that he says I want you to know this about me, I want you to trust me for who I am and what I will do with you for eternity.

But not only is it a stewardship for us as preachers, it is a privilege for every believer to have the Word of God, the revealing of God's secrets to us. I said there were 27 uses of mystery in the New Testament, the Apostle John used four in Revelation, Paul used 20 of them and the other three are in Matthew, Mark and Luke and they're the same event and it's Jesus who speaks here and it's at the parable of the four soils, remember that one where the Word of God is like seed that was thrown out by the farmer, sowed there and it was on hard soil or shallow soil or soil that got choked up by thorns and thistles, the worries of this world but then there was good soil that had a crop 30, 60 or 100 fold and after that in

Luke's account Jesus says, let him who has ears to hear, let him hear and he puts the responsibility on them to hear, to discern. But then the disciples come afterwards and in Luke's account again it's they see him privately and one of them asks, Jesus why do you speak to the people in parables? Why do you speak to them in parables? Because even the disciples didn't get it most of the time and in Matthew's account, he has the fullest account here, Matthew 13, Jesus says these words, verse 11, Jesus replied, because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them and then in verse 16 he reiterates the privilege that disciples have but blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear for truly I tell you that many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see but didn't see it and hear what you hear but never heard it.

Now we just finished a point that said God wants to reveal his mysteries so that all can read and see and hear it but within that mystery, dare I use that word, remember a few weeks ago we looked at what shall we do with predestination and that mystery of these two seeming contradictions that are not enemies but yet friends of God's sovereignty and human responsibility and there's a mystery how the two intersect and yet they are there and we saw ample evidence of how the two are there verse next to verse with the two and here you've got Jesus saying on the one hand, I speak in parables because yes it will have a sifting, discerning work but on the other hand you will not discern the truth of the parables unless it is revealed to you and Jesus highlights particularly in verse 11 just for our purpose today, the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given to you and not everybody gets to have that. It is a privilege not just to have a Bible but that it be read, that it work within us and that it be lived out in worship and obedience. Jesus says not every ear gets to hear, not every eye gets to see and read, it is our job to broadcast these mysteries of God but it is a privilege when the Holy Spirit indwells and gives you insight into the Word of God.

Can I encourage you to read your scriptures and let it be the living bread that my soul and your soul needs. Jesus said it is a privilege that we have this. Paul says much the same as he said these mysteries were locked up in the past, it is only now that we have these, what a privilege therefore to know them and such is the privilege that Paul even underscores and says you know what, even the angels aren't privy to all these things.

Look at verse 10, God's intent was that now through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. Concerning our salvation 1 Peter 1, Peter there talks about you know the prophets had long to look in these things and he said even angels long to look into these things. This is a privileged time to be in the new covenant.

It's not as though there's a lecture hall in heaven where God gives a lecture each week to the angels as to what he's going to be doing for that week. There's no giant book that says this is everything God is going to do. No, where do they get their reading from? They look at the church and God is showing his multifaceted wisdom of this grace as he makes himself known and if the angels want to know what is God up to around the world in the bride of Christ they look there and they see where revival is happening and praise God and they rejoice says Jesus in Luke 15 when every sinner repents.

We sometimes tend to forget about angels but the angels rejoice when sinners come to faith. They also see where they need to minister to the saints in the persecuted church and many of those dark areas spiritually around the world and the ministry that angels have there. If they want to know about what God is doing in some lives I'm sure some of them would have been shocked that God would choose someone like Saul, the enemy of the church, and has so transformed his life to be the principal apostle to the Gentiles.

You'll never guess who God's transforming today some of them are saying. You wouldn't believe the ratbag man or woman that God's grace has completely transformed and will be an heir to the kingdom of God. The angels are learning and seeing where God is up to and what he is doing as are the demons who with every sinner saved are reminded of their defeated calvary who with every church in unity and rejoicing know that sooner is the day when heaven and earth will be reunited and sooner will be their day where it will be in the lake of fire for them.

Now the demons are learning a lot through the church as the angels are rejoicing. Now let us not forget there are angels here today where the saints are gathered and what do they learn of our church? You see church isn't just about us. As we looked at last week about the living temple being a holy habitation for the Holy Spirit.

It was all God-centric. Now Paul brings the heavenly beings. It's more than just about us.

It's a privilege to know God's mysteries and therefore to take them in. Even the angels only learn what God is doing through us. It is an immense privilege that Paul is talking about here.

He says, I'm in prison and I'm suffering for your sake so that you can know these great secrets of God and had them broadcasted and here we are almost 2,000 years later and Paul couldn't even imagine there'd be a church here at Spring Hill in Australia. He's never heard of this place and yet here we are reading his letter and the fruit of his stewardship is being pronounced all around the world to the glory of God who is not just the revealer of mysteries but in particular the revealer of mysteries of himself to us so that we would glory in him and worship and obey him. Folks, I encourage you this week, read some of these mysteries, the secrets that God has divulged of himself.

May it become your very bread this week as you encounter Christ in his Word to be known and to be trusted. Amen. How about we stand as we pray? Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your Word.

We thank you, O God, for your incredible wisdom and again and again it is just beyond our ability to trace out. It's unfathomable to us but we thank you that you have made yourself known in your Word and I pray that you would continue, O God, to reveal yourself as through your living Word, Lord, that it would very much be our light and life that we need day by day. I pray particularly for those who struggle with the Word of God.

I really ask, Father, that they would open it this week and you would meet them by your Spirit and bring about such a godly hunger for God's Word, not just to be read but to be obeyed and let it transform. And we continue to pray, Lord, for those in our family and friendship circles who have yet to come to faith, for them, Lord, that do hear the Word but they never perceive it. Lord, where they see it but don't understand, we pray that you would be gracious and bring that revealing to them that they too may come under the living Lordship of Jesus and be nourished by your mysteries too.

Thank you for your Word today. Make it good in our lives, we ask in your precious name. Amen.

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