

## I. Paul's Revelation of One New Man

- a) In Ephesians 3:3-11, Paul communicated the revelation of God's eternal purpose in Christ. Specifically, this revelation is the body of Christ, who expresses Christ's indwelling life as an interdependent body, representing Him in the earth.
- b) At first glance, because there is so much detail in Ephesians 3:3-11, it's a little difficult to understand exactly what Paul's revelation was. That's why I want to remove some of the extra details and put this passage as follows. Paul said,

That by revelation there was made known to me the mystery. . . . the mystery of Christ . . . to be specific, that the Gentiles are . . . fellow members of the body . . . to bring to light . . . the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God . . . this was in accordance with the eternal purpose . . . in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:3-11)

- c) Let me take a minute and break apart each phrase so that we can better understand Paul's profound revelation and insight.

## II. "The mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4)

- a) When you consider the context of this passage (Eph. 3:3-11), the mystery of Christ that Paul is unveiling is the mystery of His body, the *ekklesia*.
- b) Paul made an amazing statement in 1 Corinthians 12:12, saying, "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12).
- c) The body of Christ on earth is Christ. What a profound statement and revelation! The fullness of Christ is Christ the head in heaven joined to Christ the body on earth. Because of Christ's indwelling life, we are literally the expression of Christ's heavenly life in the earth. Of course, that doesn't make us gods. But we are a corporate vessel that God fills and possesses.
- d) When Saul (Paul) was traveling to Damascus, he had a life-transforming, history-altering encounter with the risen Christ. As light suddenly flashed around him, he fell to the ground and heard the voice of Jesus say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me . . . I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5).
- e) From Jesus' perspective, His *ekklesia*, His body, is Him. To treat His body well is to treat Him well. Conversely, to persecute His body is to persecute Him. The body of Christ on earth is Jesus on earth. Together, we are the expression of His life in the earth.
- f) This point becomes resoundingly clear in Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46). Without getting into all the details of this parable, we see that how we treat the Lord's brothers is how we treat Him (Matt. 25:40). If members of His body are hungry and we feed them, we also feed the Lord. If members of His body are thirsty and we give them something to drink, we also give the Lord a drink. The same is true with visiting prisoners, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and showing hospitality to the stranger. The way we treat the body of Christ is the way we treat Christ, for in the Lord's eyes, His body is an extension of Himself.
- g) This amazing reality is confirmed in Acts 1:1, when Luke wrote "about all that Jesus began to do and teach." The gospels were the beginning of what Jesus did. The book of Acts was the continuation of Jesus' ministry in the earth, as the indwelling life of Christ empowered His body.

## III. "The Gentiles are . . . fellow members of the body" (Eph. 3:6)

- a) The mystery of Christ that Paul unveiled is that Gentiles are fellow members of the body of Christ.

- b) This statement brings us back one chapter to Ephesians 2, where Paul stated,

Remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh . . . you were at that time separate from Christ. . . . But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. . . . so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man. (Eph. 2:11-15)

- c) In this one new man, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Every distinction that you could possibly imagine has been removed. In Christ, there is not white nor black. There is not male nor female. There is not American nor African. There is not European nor Asian. There is not DAWGS nor Jackets, Tide nor Tigers (For us college football fans in the South). All distinctions, blood lines, nationalism, racial superiority—all of it has been removed in Christ. Now we have one new man—the corporate expression of Christ’s body in the earth.
- d) The “one new man” that Paul revealed is meant to become the “mature man” of Ephesians 4:13, which is “the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”
- e) Don’t forget the phrase “one new man,” for we will expound upon this phrase in great detail in a moment.

#### IV. “The mystery which . . . has been hidden in God” (Eph. 3:9)

- a) For ages past, this mystery of the *ekklesia* was hidden in God.
- b) Just as Eve was in Adam, the church was hidden in the Son. Somewhat like Adam, Jesus was put into a deep sleep on the cross. As the Roman spear pierced His side, blood and water poured forth. As Adam’s rib formed his bride, the blood and water formed Christ’s bride. The blood cleansed us from all sin and defilement, while the water pointed to the life-giving water of the Spirit that would dwell within us, making us Christ’s very own possession. This is the mystery of Christ and His church (Eph. 5:32).
- c) Now that Pentecost has been fulfilled and the Spirit dwells within His people, the church is “now bone of [His] bones, and flesh of [His] flesh” (Gen. 2:23, emphasis mine). More precisely, we are now spirit of His Spirit, having come forth fully from Christ’s side (1 Cor. 6:17).
- d) The mystery of Christ’s body was hidden within God for ages. Now this profound mystery has been revealed. Together, we are an interdependent body that expresses Christ’s indwelling life and together we represent the Man Christ Jesus in the earth.

#### V. “The eternal purpose . . . in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:11)

- a) As I wrote about in *The Eternal Blueprint*, there are five components to God’s eternal purpose. The church, as an interdependent body organically expressing Christ’s indwelling life together, is one of these components.
- b) In summary, in Ephesians 3:3-11, Paul is revealing God’s eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. Specifically, he is unveiling the mystery of Christ’s body—the one new man—in whom all blood lines, racial superiority, and gender elitism has been removed in Christ. This one new man is Christ’s body on the earth, an interdependent body who organically expresses Christ’s indwelling life and represents Him in a given city to the unbelieving world and to powers and principalities in heavenly places.

#### VI. The Corporate Expression of Christ Is Essential

- a) The words “together,” “we,” “us,” “body,” and “church” are used 55 times in 155 verses in the book of Ephesians. So, 35% of the verses in this epistle are focused on the corporate expression of Christ’s indwelling life.

- b) Here's the point: The fullness of Christ can only be experienced corporately—not merely individually.
- c) Many believers, having been burned by organized religion under the government of man, despise the church. They rarely, if ever, gather together with other Christ followers who are filled with the Spirit. Isolated and independent, they seek Jesus on their own, blinded to their desperate need for Christ's corporate body.
- d) These lone rangers will never come into the fullness of God's eternal purpose—no matter how much they love Jesus, no matter how abandoned they are, no matter how much they pray, fast, and seek God, and no matter how nice they are.
- e) God established an immutable law in His eternal council that can never be violated. Namely, the fullness of Christ can only be experienced corporately—not merely individually (Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:13). If you care about the fullness of Christ, please don't abandon the local gathering of His people who are submitted to the Holy Spirit.
- f) The Lord's agenda for His church is so much greater than your individual agenda or your individual ministry. The day of independence and isolation must end if we're ever to see the fullness of Christ.
- g) Jesus is coming back for a united bride, not a harem of isolated, me-and-Jesus seekers. The Lord is preparing a corporate man, a unified son, to place into His eternal inheritance—not a scattered and independent group of children doing their own thing.
- h) If you want to see the fullness of Christ released at the end of the age, you need to understand the importance of His indwelling life expressed corporately through His unified body.

## VII. The Corporate Man

- a) Paul used the word "one new man" and "mature man" to articulate God's eternal purpose for the church (Eph. 2:15; 4:13). His purpose for the ages is for the *ekklesia* to become a mature representation of the Man, Christ Jesus—both in a given city and throughout the earth.
- b) Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul strategically used the word "man" to reveal God's plan for the corporate man, the body of Christ, who is meant to be a representation of Jesus Christ in the earth.
- c) This word "man" connects the revelation of "man," specifically the corporate man, from Genesis to Revelation. Let me explain.
- d) Close to six-hundred years before the eternal Son became a Man in Jesus of Nazareth, Ezekiel was escorted into heaven's throne room (Ezek. 1). There he beheld the breathtaking glory and beauty of God. At the pinnacle of this experience, after encountering living beings and a mysterious whirling wheel, Ezekiel looks up and sees "something resembling a throne" (Ezek. 1:26). Sitting upon the throne "was a figure with the appearance of a man" (Ezek. 1:26). Who was this mysterious man, enthroned at the pinnacle of heaven, some six-hundred years before Jesus of Nazareth? It would be hard to argue against this Man being the preincarnate Christ, the eternal Son in whom the fullness of deity dwelt in bodily form. It's likely that the eternal Son became a Man before Genesis 1:26, when God created man in His image and likeness.
- e) God's eternal purpose, before time and creation, was for us "to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). We, both individually and corporately, are called to be formed into the image of the Man, Christ Jesus.
- f) This brings us to Genesis 1:26, where God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." One verse later, it states, "God created man in His own image . . . male and female." From the beginning, both "male and female" were meant to become the corporate man, who is a mature reflection and representation of the Man on the heavenly throne, Jesus Christ.

- g) As Romans 5:12-21 reveals, there is the Man, Adam, who is the head of the fallen race of men and women. All humanity is born in a fallen state, having Adam as our head. Because the Lord operates corporately, we are born into Adam, just as Paul revealed in Romans 5:12-21. But thankfully, Paul also reveals another Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. All who are born again by the Holy Spirit belong to a new creation, the *ekklesia*. In this new creation, Jesus Christ as the “second Man,” is the head of His body—specifically, those who have His indwelling life (1 Cor. 15:47).
- h) In Ephesians 4:24, Paul introduces us to another Man—the new man “in the likeness of God [that] has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 4:24, emphasis mine). This is the new creation on an individual level. This is the new creation of the individual parts of Christ’s body. Every one of us who have been born of the Spirit are a new creation in Christ. We have a new spirit, a new heart, and the Spirit of God has taken up residence in our spirit. We are a new man, a new species, a new creation.
- i) But Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 2:15 that the “one new man” was never intended to be solely for individuals. It’s a corporate calling. Together, we compromise the “one new man.” The *ekklesia* is a new creation corporately. Having Jesus Christ as our head, we are His mutually interdependent body, expressing His indwelling life together as one body in one Spirit.
- j) Paul said, “Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). Based upon this statement, early Christians referred to themselves as the “third race.”<sup>1</sup>
- f) Frank Viola said, “Before Jesus Christ entered the pages of human history, there were only two races: Jew and Gentile. But with the coming of Christ, and the church . . . there are now three races: Jew, Gentile, and the *ekklesia* of God.”<sup>2</sup>

## VIII. The Pattern Son

- a) T. Austin-Sparks said,

Despite all our fussing and effort to reproduce a “New Testament Order” we never get more than a man-made institution. The New Testament and what is there never came about in that way. . . . Everything then was the free and spontaneous movement of the Holy Spirit, and He did it in full view of the Pattern—God’s Son. The ministry of the Holy Spirit has ever been to reveal Jesus Christ, and in revealing Him, to conform everything to Him.

No human genius can do this. We cannot obtain anything in our New Testament as the result of human study, research, or reason. It is all the Holy Spirit’s revelation of Jesus Christ. Ours it is to seek continually to see Him by the Spirit, and we shall know that He—not a paper-pattern—is the Pattern, the Order, the Form. It is all a Person who is the sum of all purpose and ways.<sup>3</sup>

- b) God’s goal for the church is to reveal Jesus Christ and to conform us, corporately, into His image. This is what the Lord had in mind in revealing the one new man.
- c) The Lord will never be satisfied having scattered individuals who have been formed into the image and likeness of Christ. It is a corporate man that God is after. It is a corporate man, as seen in Genesis 1:26-27, that the Lord has always desired. God’s purpose for the church is for us to “bear the image of the heavenly” Man together (1 Cor. 15:49). God’s purpose for the church is for us to grow up and become a “mature man,” who represents Christ in the earth (Eph. 4:13).
- d) The mystery of Christ in Ephesians 3:3-11 that Paul unveiled is the corporate man—a corporate new creation and third race. We are called to fully bear the image of the heavenly Man Christ Jesus and represent Him in the earth to unbelievers and in the heavens to powers and principalities.

<sup>1</sup> Frank Viola, *From Eternity to Here* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2009), p. 265 in the Kindle app.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.austin-sparks.net/m/001871.html>, referenced on 8/9/2019.