

The Mystery of Epiphany (Year ABC)

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6—The Mystery of the Gentiles

²[Y]ou have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, ³ how *the mystery was made known to me by revelation*, as I have written briefly... ⁵ [It] was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶ that is, *how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body*, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6)

1. **Mystery**: “mystery” (Greek *mysterion*) (3:3)

- a. Something hidden that is unveiled or revealed
- b. Paul uses *mysterion* 21x in his letters, 6x in Ephesians!

⁹ For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight *the mystery of his will*, according to his purpose which he set forth ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, *to unite all things in Christ* (Greek *anakephalaiōsasthai ta panta en tō Christō*), things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph 1:9-10, RSV adapted)

2. **Revelation**: “revelation” (Greek *apokalypsis*) (3:3)

3. **Gentiles**: “the Gentiles” or “the nations” (Greek *ta ethnē*) (3:6)

The Living Tradition

Eusebius of Caesarea: Behold how today, yes, in our own times, our eyes see not only Egyptians, but every race of men who used to be idolaters... released from the errors of polytheism and the demons, and calling on the God of the prophets!... *Yes, in our own time the knowledge of the Omnipotent God shines forth and sets a seal of certainty on the forecasts of the prophets. You see this actually going on, you no longer only expect to hear of it, and if you ask the moment when the change began, for all your inquiry you will receive no other answer but the moment of the appearance of the Savior...* And who would not be struck by the extraordinary change—that men who for ages have paid divine honor to wood and stone and demons, wild beasts that feed on human flesh, poisonous reptiles, animals of every kinds, repulsive monsters, fire and earth, and the lifeless elements of the universe should after our Savior’s coming pray to the Most High God, Creator of Heaven and earth, the actual Lord of the prophets, and the God of Abraham and his forefathers? (Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel*, 1.6.20-21)¹

¹ See Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel, Volumes I and II* (Trans. W. J. Farrer; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 37-39.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Epiphany, Years ABC)

1. Exactly what “mystery” has been revealed to Paul? What does it have to do with what we celebrate on the feast of Epiphany?

For Further Study

1. The Mystery of Epiphany (CCC 528).
2. Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Volume 3 (pp. 89-119).