

THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY

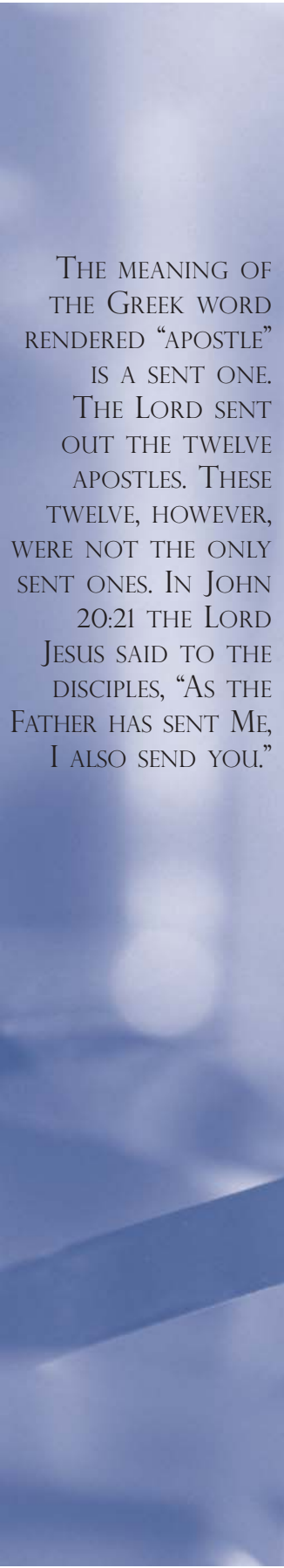
BY WITNESS LEE

In Ephesians 3, a parenthetical word, Paul begins to beseech the saints to walk worthily of God's calling. What Paul speaks regarding himself in this chapter is a pattern for one who would walk worthily of God's calling. In order to walk worthily of God's calling, we need to be a prisoner of the Lord, a steward, and a minister. As one imprisoned in Christ, Paul saw a heavenly vision. The more he saw of this vision, the more he experienced Christ and gained Christ. Paul was also a steward dispensing the riches of Christ to the members of the household of God. Furthermore, he was a faithful minister, one who ministered Christ to the members of the Body so that Christ might be expressed in the Body.

To walk worthily of God's calling is not simply to be kind, humble, and loving. It is to be imprisoned, confined, in Christ, where we see the vision. By seeing this vision, we experience Christ, and Christ is wrought into our being to make us stewards to dispense the riches of Christ into others. We also become ministers dispensing the riches of Christ to the members of the Body so that the Body may be built up. We all need to be imprisoned in Christ so that we may experience Him more and minister more of Him to others.

Ephesians 3:3 says, "By revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief." God's hidden purpose is the mystery, and the unveiling of this mystery is the revelation. To carry out this revelation is the apostle's ministry for the producing of the church. A revelation is an unveiling, the taking away of a veil. In the New Testament we have the revelation, the unveiling, of God's economy. In other ages and generations this economy was a hidden mystery. It was not made known to Adam, to Abraham, to Moses, to David, or to Isaiah and the other prophets. If they had been asked what God's economy is, they would have been unable to answer, for during their time the mystery was still veiled. God's economy, the dispensing of Himself into man to produce a Body for His Son, had not been revealed to them.

The Son of God is the embodiment of God. God's economy is to dispense Himself into a great number of human beings in order to produce a Body for this embodiment of Himself. This means that the Son of God as the embodiment of God requires a Body, an increase, an expansion. This expansion can be produced only by God's dispensing of Himself into His chosen people. This is the greatest mystery in the universe. Although many political leaders and dignitaries know nothing about this great mystery, by God's mercy we know what it is. We know that God's economy is to dispense Himself into His chosen people in order to produce the Body as the expansion of the Son of God for the full expression of God in the universe. Nothing is greater or more important than this. Praise the Lord that not only do we know what God's economy



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is, but we are also in it! In fact, we even are it. We know it, we are in it, and we are it. By revelation this great mystery, which had been hidden until the coming of the Lord Jesus, has been unveiled to us.

The Revelation to the Apostles and Prophets

This mystery has been revealed to the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:5). Do you regard the apostles and prophets as outstanding people? The fact that the mystery has been revealed to them causes many to regard them as extraordinary. However, in 3:8 Paul, who was an apostle, referred to himself as “less than the least of all saints.” According to Paul’s own word, the apostles and prophets were not extraordinary, for Paul said that he was less than we are. On the one hand, we may regard the apostles and prophets as extraordinary; but, on the other hand, we should consider them the same as we are.

Only in the book of Ephesians does Paul say that he was less than the least of all saints. Notice that he did not say here that he was less than the apostles, although in 1 Corinthians 15:9 he did say that he was “the least of the apostles.” It is surely very significant that Paul inserted such a word into this section of Ephesians. If we did not have this verse, we would all be inclined to view the apostles as great men. Why did Paul mention this? It was because he was exhorting the believers to walk worthily of God’s calling. As he made this exhortation, he presented himself as an example, saying that he was less than the least of all saints. If Paul had not uttered this word, we might be tempted to excuse ourselves by saying that Paul, who was a great apostle, could have such a walk but that we are not able to have it. By inserting this word, Paul gave no place for such an excuse. In 3:8 Paul seemed to be saying, “Saints, don’t think that I am greater than you. No, I am less. Since someone less than you can do this, then certainly you can do it also.” We should not make excuses for ourselves. If Paul could have this kind of grace, we all can have it. If Paul could live such a life and walk worthily of God’s calling, then we can also.

The meaning of the Greek word rendered “apostle” is a sent one. If you send me to Los Angeles for a certain purpose, I am your apostle, your sent one. In the Bible an apostle is someone sent by God. Although John the Baptist was sent by God, he should not be considered the first sent one in the New Testament economy, because his ministry was during a transitional period. The first one sent by God in the New Testament economy was the Lord Jesus. Hence, He was the first Apostle (Heb. 3:1). The Lord sent out the twelve apostles. These twelve, however, were not the only sent ones. In John 20:21 the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” This verse proves that all the disciples were sent ones. This means that every believer is a sent one.

Even a young sister in junior high school is one sent to school by the Lord to minister Christ to her teachers and classmates. Likewise, if you are burdened for one of your relatives and the Lord sends you to him for the purpose of ministering Christ to him, are you not one sent by Christ? Yes, to your relatives you are Christ’s apostle. You may even be an apostle to those in your own family. One day the Lord may send you to your mother to share Christ with her. At such a time you are an apostle to your mother. Therefore, in a sense, we all are the Lord’s apostles, His sent ones.

In like manner, there is a sense in which all believers in Christ are prophets. Contrary to the concept of many Christians, a prophet is not primarily one who predicts the future; he is a spokesman for God. According to Hebrews 3, Moses, one called by God and sent to the children of Israel, was an apostle; he typified Christ as God’s Apostle. When the Lord called him and sent him out as an apostle, Moses was timid and claimed that he could not speak well. Then the Lord told Moses that He would give

him his brother Aaron as a prophet. Aaron was given by God to Moses not to predict the future on behalf of Moses but to be his spokesman. By this we see that the ministry of a prophet goes along with that of an apostle. Moses was the apostle, and Aaron was the prophet.

On the one hand, we are apostles and, on the other hand, we are prophets. The young people are sent to school as apostles, but when they open their mouths to speak on behalf of the Lord, they are prophets. Likewise, if you go to your mother with the burden to minister Christ to her, you are an apostle. But as you speak for Christ, you are also a prophet. It is a shame to be a Christian for years without ever going to someone with the burden to minister Christ to him. It is also a shame to be a Christian without ever speaking to others on behalf of Christ. A normal believer is both an apostle and a prophet, a sent one and a spokesman.

Suppose, under the Lord's sovereignty, some of you are burdened to move to another city. You minister Christ to the people there, and after a period of time a number become believers. Then you all meet together as the church in that locality. Through whom was that church raised up? It was raised up by the apostles sent by the Lord to that locality. Because these sent ones also speak for God, they are prophets as well as apostles.

We all have been strongly influenced by the concepts in Christianity. In Catholicism Peter has been elevated to be a pope, and others have been given high positions in the so-called holy service. But all believers are in the holy service, and all of us could be called "popes," because the word *pope* simply means "father." All can be fathers because every believer can be a sent one and a prophet. If you are not a sent one and a prophet, then you are not faithful to the Lord and not obedient to Him. Suppose the Lord sends you to a remote region with the burden to minister Christ to the unbelievers there. This means that you are the apostle sent to that area. Because you are the one to speak for God, you are also the prophet.

Regarding apostles and prophets, we all have been drugged by religious concepts. We all must be apostles and prophets. Suppose a certain sister works as a nurse in a hospital. Do you think God wants her merely to be a nurse? No! God sends her to that hospital to be an apostle and a prophet. God's authority is always with such a person. If you practice your apostleship and prophethood, God will be with you as your authority. Many times we do not have authority because we fail to practice our apostleship. Wherever we are, at home, at school, or at work, we need to be there as those sent by the Lord to minister Christ to others by speaking for Christ.

The apostles and prophets, however, must bear a particular sign to prove that they are apostles and prophets. This sign is the revelation of the mystery. If you go to someone without this revelation, you are neither an apostle nor a prophet. When you contact people for Christ, you must let them know in a proper way that you have seen something they have not seen. It is by having this revelation that we have the boldness to say that we are God's sent ones and God's spokesmen. If a young brother has such a revelation, he can say to his unbelieving father, who may have a doctorate in physics, "Father, you know a great deal about science, but you don't know anything about Christ. I know Christ, for I have seen the revelation concerning Him. Christ is my life. He lives in me, He is one with me, and He is everything to me." If you have this revelation, then you are an apostle and a prophet.

Ephesians 3:5 says that the mystery has been revealed to the apostles and prophets in spirit. The word *spirit* here refers to the human spirit of the apostles and prophets, a spirit regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. It can be considered the mingled spirit, the human spirit mingled with God's Spirit. Such a

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mingled spirit is the means by which the New Testament revelation concerning Christ and the church is unveiled to the apostles and prophets. We need the same spirit to see such a revelation. When we speak to others about Christ and the church, we should speak not from our mind, emotion, or will. Rather, from our spirit we should tell others what we have experienced of Christ and the church. The principle here is that emotion touches emotion, mind touches mind, and will touches will. Likewise, only spirit can contact spirit. If you speak to others from your emotion, you will not be able to touch their spirit. But if you speak out from your spirit, their spirit will be touched. The revelation received by the apostles and prophets is not a revelation of the many secondary matters in the Bible. It is the revelation concerning Christ and the church. In order to dispense Christ to others, we need to have this revelation.

The Mystery of Christ

In Ephesians 3:4 Paul speaks of the mystery of Christ. The mystery of God in Colossians 2:2 is Christ, whereas the mystery of Christ here is the church. God is a mystery, and Christ, as the embodiment of God to express Him, is the mystery of God. Christ is also a mystery, and the church, as the Body of Christ to express Him, is the mystery of Christ.

This mystery was hidden in other generations but has been revealed in the New Testament age. The mystery of Christ, the church, which is His Body, was hidden in the Old Testament ages. None of the Old Testament saints knew anything regarding this mystery. But it is revealed in the New Testament to all believers through the apostles and prophets. Today our ministry is simply to carry on this revelation. The mystery of Christ is the church, which is the Body of Christ. Regarding the church as the mystery of Christ, Ephesians 3:6 says that “in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel.”

The term *fellow heirs* indicates that in God’s New Testament economy, the nations, the chosen and redeemed Gentiles, are joined with the believing Jews to be the heirs of God, inheriting God. The term *fellow members of the Body* indicates that the saved Gentiles are joined with the saved Jews to be the one Body of Christ for His unique expression. The term *fellow partakers* indicates that the Gentile believers are joined with the Jewish believers to partake of God’s promises given in the Old Testament concerning all the blessings of God’s New Testament economy. *Fellow heirs* is related to the blessing of the household of God; *fellow members of the Body* is related to the blessing of the Body of Christ; and *fellow partakers* is related to the blessing of the promises of God, as found in Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 22:18; 28:14; and Isaiah 9:6. Both the blessing of God’s household and the blessing of Christ’s Body are particular, whereas the blessing of God’s promise is general, all-inclusive. The church as the Body of Christ is brought forth out of the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). The church is not brought forth out of doctrines or systems of organization. As the Body of Christ, the church can be brought forth only out of the riches of what Christ is.

According to God’s intention, the church is to express His multifarious wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies (v. 10). This is to shame Satan and his followers. Satan’s plots afford God the opportunity to express His wisdom in a multifarious way through the church. The producing of the church to be the Body of Christ is according to the eternal purpose which God made in Christ in eternity past (v. 11). The formation of the church is not accidental but eternally planned. God’s purpose in having the church is to dispense Himself into His chosen people (v. 9). Hence, the church as the Body of Christ is the dispensation of God. 