

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 24, Stewardship of the Great Mystery (Eph 3:1-13) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 24, Stewardship of the Great Mystery (Eph 3:1-13), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Darko's lecture, Session 24 on Ephesians 3 from his "Prison Epistles" series, explores Paul's concept of the stewardship of the great mystery. This mystery, now revealed, centers on the unification and equality of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ through the gospel. Darko unpacks the meaning of "stewardship" in this context, highlighting Paul's divinely appointed role to proclaim this previously hidden truth. He emphasizes that the unity of the church demonstrates God's wisdom to spiritual powers and encourages believers to live fearlessly in this reality. Finally, Darko previews Paul's subsequent prayer for the Ephesians, focusing on their strengthening and being filled with God's fullness.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 24 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → Prison Epistles).**



**Darko_PrisonEp_Se
ssion24.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 24, Stewardship of the Great Mystery (Eph 3:1-13)

Briefing Document: Stewardship of the Great Mystery (Ephesians 3)

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Daniel K. Darko in Session 24 of his lecture series on the Prison Epistles, focusing on Ephesians 3:1-13, which he titles "Stewardship of the Great Mystery." Dr. Darko unpacks Paul's explanation of a previously hidden mystery now revealed, the role of Paul as a steward of this mystery, and the implications of this revelation for the unity of Jews and Gentiles within the church and its impact on the spiritual realm.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Unfolding "Great Mystery":

- Dr. Darko highlights that Ephesians 3 marks Paul's explicit articulation of a "mystery of Christ" hinted at earlier. This mystery is intrinsically linked to the unity within the body of Christ, forming a "new community" (referencing the discussion in Ephesians 2).
- Paul states the mystery directly in verses 5-6: *"which 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. The mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers or sharers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."*
- This unity of Jews and Gentiles as "fellow heirs," "members of the same body," and "partakers... of the promise" was previously unknown and represents a significant unfolding of God's plan in Christ.
- Dr. Darko emphasizes that this unity, as discussed in Ephesians 2:11-22, is not just about worshipping the same God but about the **equality** between Jewish and Gentile Christians: *"The mystery, then, is not the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the worship of the one God but their equality with each other."*

1. Stewardship of God's Grace:

- Paul refers to himself as a "prisoner for Christ Jesus, on behalf of you Gentiles," and mentions the "stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you" (Ephesians 3:1-2).

- Dr. Darko explains the Greek word for "stewardship" (*oikonomia*) has roots in household management, signifying a delegated responsibility to manage important affairs.
- Paul views his role as an apostle to the Gentiles as a privileged stewardship of God's grace, a task delegated to him by God, for which he is accountable.
- Even in prison, Paul maintains his sense of this stewardship: *"even in jail, Paul is saying, he assumes his role as a steward, not a steward of anything, but a steward of God's grace."*

1. **Revelation of the Mystery:**

- Paul clarifies that this mystery was "made known to me by revelation" (Ephesians 3:3), emphasizing that he did not discover it independently. Dr. Darko notes the "divine passive" in the Greek, suggesting a divine agent (God) revealed it to him.
- This revelation was also made to "his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5). Dr. Darko clarifies that these New Testament prophets are distinct from Old Testament prophets and refer to those gifted with speaking forth God's message, sometimes with predictive elements, but not the "questionable prophets" of modern times who focus on trivial details. *"Prophecy, basically, in both the Old and New Testaments, is forth-telling or fore-telling. A prophet, as a messenger of God, gifted and given that mandate, tells forth what God has revealed to him or her to the people."*
- The mystery was "hidden for ages in God" (Ephesians 3:9) and is now being brought to light through Paul's ministry.

1. **Paul's Unworthiness and God's Grace:**

- Paul describes himself as "the least of all the saints" (Ephesians 3:8). Dr. Darko notes that the Greek expression Paul uses signifies "the least of the least," highlighting Paul's profound sense of unworthiness due to his past actions against the early church.
- His appointment as a steward is attributed solely to God's grace, emphasizing that it was not earned or deserved: *"Paul says the mystery was revealed to him as a gift. He cannot boast because he does not deserve to be the one to be given such a privileged task."*

1. Purpose of Revealing the Mystery through the Church:

- A key purpose of revealing this mystery through the church is "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10).
- Dr. Darko explains that the unity of Jews and Gentiles within the church serves as a powerful demonstration of God's wisdom to spiritual powers in the unseen realm. Their unity contradicts the desires of evil spirits who seek disunity. *"Think about that. I mentioned to you about the heavenly realms in the early part of this discussion on Ephesians. That is a special concept... Paul said these powers, if they wanted to hinder the advancement of the gospel, they failed. So, when Jews and Gentiles are living together, it is exactly what they don't want."*
- The united church, living in "one accord" and "one spirit," deals a significant blow to "evil spiritual powers" and denies them access and influence. *"Do you know that when the church is firmly and strongly united, evil spiritual powers are losing their strongholds? That's Paul's point here."*
- This manifestation of God's wisdom through the church is part of God's "eternal purpose that he realized in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11).

1. Boldness and Access Through Faith:

- Through Christ, believers have "boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him" (Ephesians 3:12).
- Dr. Darko explains that "boldness" (*parrhesia*) signifies freedom of speech and the ability to proclaim the gospel without fear of intimidation, whether from demonic powers or societal pressures. *"In this Christ, we can find boldness and access through faith. We will not be overcome by fear."*
- He encourages believers, particularly those in non-Western contexts facing spiritual realities, to not be crippled by fear of evil forces if their faith in Christ is strong.

1. Paul's Suffering for the Gentiles' Glory:

- Paul asks the Ephesians "not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory" (Ephesians 3:13).

- Dr. Darko interprets this as Paul assuring the believers that his imprisonment is for their benefit and should not discourage them. He is in a "good place" for a "good cause."

1. Transition to Paul's Prayer (Ephesians 3:14-21):

- Dr. Darko briefly introduces the subsequent passage (Ephesians 3:14-21) as Paul's intercessory prayer for the community.
- He highlights Paul's posture (bowing on his knees in humility), the object of his prayer (the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives their name, emphasizing God's sovereignty and desire for all to come to Christ), and the content of his prayer (that they may be granted strength, power through the Spirit, Christ dwelling in their hearts, and being filled with the fullness of God).
- Dr. Darko emphasizes Paul's practice of not only teaching but also praying for believers, desiring their growth and faithfulness.

Key Quotes:

- *"The mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers or sharers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."* (Ephesians 3:6)
- *"The mystery, then, is not the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the worship of the one God but their equality with each other."*
- *"even in jail, Paul is saying, he assumes his role as a steward, not a steward of anything, but a steward of God's grace."*
- *"which 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."* (Ephesians 3:5)
- *"Prophecy, basically, in both the Old and New Testaments, is forth-telling or fore-telling. A prophet, as a messenger of God, gifted and given that mandate, tells forth what God has revealed to him or her to the people."*
- *"to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God..."* (Ephesians 3:8-9)
- *"so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."* (Ephesians 3:10)

- *"Think about that... Paul said these powers, if they wanted to hinder the advancement of the gospel, they failed. So, when Jews and Gentiles are living together, it is exactly what they don't want."*
- *"Do you know that when the church is firmly and strongly united, evil spiritual powers are losing their strongholds? That's Paul's point here."*
- *"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him." (Ephesians 3:12)*
- *"I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory." (Ephesians 3:13)*

Conclusion:

Dr. Darko's lecture provides a detailed explanation of Ephesians 3:1-13, emphasizing the revolutionary nature of the revealed mystery – the equal inclusion and unity of Gentiles with Jews in Christ. He underscores Paul's divinely appointed role as a steward of this grace, even amidst suffering. Furthermore, Dr. Darko highlights the profound impact of this unified church on the spiritual realm, demonstrating God's manifold wisdom to heavenly powers and empowering believers with boldness and access to God through faith. The lecture sets the stage for exploring Paul's subsequent intercessory prayer for the Ephesians.

4. Study Guide: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 24, Stewardship of the Great Mystery (Eph 3:1-13)

Study Guide: Stewardship of the Great Mystery (Ephesians 3)

Key Themes:

- The revelation and nature of the "mystery" of Christ.
- Paul's role as a steward of this mystery.
- The unification of Jews and Gentiles in Christ.
- The cosmic significance of the church's unity.
- Access to God through faith and boldness in Christ.
- Paul's prayer for the Ephesians and their spiritual growth.

Quiz:

1. What does Dr. Darko identify as the main topic of Ephesians 3:1-13, and what is the significance of the word "stewardship" in this context?
2. According to Paul in Ephesians 3, what is the core content of the "mystery" that has now been revealed, and how does it relate to the discussion of unity in the body of Christ in chapter 2?
3. How did Paul come to understand this "mystery," and what does Dr. Darko mean by the "divine passive" in relation to this revelation?
4. In what way does Dr. Darko clarify the meaning of "prophets" in Ephesians 3, distinguishing them from Old Testament prophets and some modern interpretations?
5. What is the significance of the unification of Jews and Gentiles, according to Dr. Darko, beyond simply people from different backgrounds worshipping together?
6. How does Paul describe his own sense of worthiness in relation to being entrusted with the stewardship of this mystery, and what is the meaning of the Greek expression he uses?
7. According to Dr. Darko, what is the purpose of making the mystery known "to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" through the church?

8. What impact does the unity of the church have on the "principalities and powers" in the spiritual realm, as explained by Dr. Darko, and why is this significant?
9. What does Paul mean by "boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him" (Ephesians 3:12), and how does Dr. Darko interpret the word for "boldness"?
10. What are the three key petitions that Dr. Darko highlights in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in the latter part of chapter 3?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. Dr. Darko identifies the main topic of Ephesians 3:1-13 as the Stewardship of the Great Mystery. Stewardship, in this context, refers to the task and responsibility delegated to Paul by God to manage and make known this mystery.
2. The core of the mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. This directly relates to the unity discussed in chapter 2, where Jews and Gentiles become one new community in Christ.
3. Paul states that the mystery was made known to him by revelation, a "divine passive" implying that God himself was the active agent in revealing this truth to Paul, rather than Paul discovering it on his own.
4. Dr. Darko clarifies that the "prophets" here likely refer to New Testament prophets, individuals gifted with prophecy in the early church, distinct from the Old Testament prophets ("the prophets and the law") and questionable modern interpretations focused on prediction.
5. The unification of Jews and Gentiles signifies their equality in Christ and their shared inheritance and participation in the body of Christ, not just their coming together to worship the same God. It demonstrates a fundamental equality within God's people.
6. Paul describes himself as "the least of all the saints," even coining a word meaning "the least of the least" to emphasize his deep sense of unworthiness to be entrusted with such a significant role due to his past actions against the church.
7. The purpose of making the mystery known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places through the church is to display God's manifold wisdom. The unified church serves as a demonstration of God's plan to these spiritual powers.

8. Dr. Darko explains that the unity of the church acts as a blow to the "principalities and powers" because their aim is to create division. When Jews and Gentiles live in unity as one body, it frustrates these evil spiritual forces and their desire to cause disunity.
9. "Boldness and access with confidence" refers to the freedom and lack of intimidation believers have in approaching God through their faith in Christ. Dr. Darko notes that the word for "boldness" (parrhesia) in classical Greek relates to freedom of public speech.
10. The three key petitions highlighted in Paul's prayer are that God may grant according to the riches of his glory, that the believers may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in their inner being, and that they may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the significance of Paul's self-identification as a "prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles" in relation to his understanding and communication of the "mystery" in Ephesians 3. How does his suffering connect to the "glory" of the Gentile believers?
2. Analyze the concept of "stewardship of God's grace" as it is presented in Ephesians 3, according to Dr. Darko's lecture. What does it entail for Paul, and what implications might it have for believers today in understanding their own roles within God's plan?
3. Explore the implications of the "mystery" – the unification and equality of Jews and Gentiles in Christ – for the understanding of the church and its mission in a world often marked by division and prejudice.
4. Critically evaluate Dr. Darko's explanation of the cosmic significance of the church's unity in Ephesians 3:10, particularly its impact on "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." How might this understanding shape a believer's perspective on the importance of unity within the Christian community?
5. Consider the relationship between the revelation of the "mystery," Paul's role as a steward, and his prayer for the Ephesians in chapter 3. How do these elements work together to advance God's eternal purpose, and what can we learn from this interconnectedness?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Mystery (in Ephesians 3):** A truth previously hidden but now revealed by God in Christ, specifically the inclusion of Gentiles as fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, alongside Jewish believers.
- **Stewardship (oikonomia):** The responsibility and privilege of managing and administering something belonging to another. In Ephesians 3, it refers to the task delegated to Paul by God to make known the mystery of Christ. It carries connotations of household management and accountability.
- **Gentiles:** Non-Jewish people. In the context of Ephesians 3, their inclusion as equals in God's plan alongside Jewish believers is a central aspect of the revealed mystery.
- **Fellow Heirs (synglēronomoi):** Co-inheritors; sharing equally in the inheritance promised in Christ. This compound Greek word emphasizes the close unity in their shared inheritance.
- **Same Body (syssōma):** Members of the same physical body. This compound word highlights the unified nature of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ.
- **Partakers/Sharers (symmetochoi):** Those who share together; participants in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. The compound form underscores the intimate and shared participation.
- **Divine Passive:** A grammatical construction in Greek where the verb is in the passive voice, but the implied agent is understood to be God. In Ephesians 3, Paul's receiving the revelation of the mystery is described this way, indicating God as the revealer.
- **Rulers and Authorities in the Heavenly Places:** Spiritual powers and principalities in the unseen, spiritual realm. The church's unity is presented as a way God's wisdom is made known even to these cosmic entities.
- **Boldness (parrhesia):** Freedom of speech, openness, and confidence, particularly in proclaiming the gospel without fear or hindrance.

5. FAQs on Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 24, Stewardship of the Great Mystery (Eph 3:1-13), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Stewardship of the Great Mystery in Ephesians 3

1. What is the "mystery" that Paul refers to in Ephesians 3? The mystery, according to Paul in Ephesians 3:6, is that the Gentiles are now fellow heirs with the Jews, members of the same body of Christ, and partakers of the same promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. This signifies the complete equality and unification of Jews and Gentiles within God's people, something that was not fully understood or revealed in previous generations. It's not just a unity in worshipping one God, but an equality in their standing before God in Christ.

2. What does Paul mean by "stewardship of the great mystery"? Stewardship, in this context (drawing from the Greek word *oikonomia*), refers to the responsibility and privileged task that God has entrusted to Paul to manage and make known this mystery of Christ, particularly to the Gentiles. It involves administering God's grace and unfolding this plan of unity between Jews and Gentiles. Paul sees himself as a delegated manager of this divine household affair, accountable to God for carrying out this important work.

3. How was this mystery revealed, according to Paul? Paul emphasizes that this mystery was not something he discovered on his own but was made known to him by revelation from a divine agent, likely God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:3-5). This revelation was also given to the holy apostles and prophets of the New Testament, distinguishing it from the understanding of previous generations. Paul highlights the divine initiative in unveiling this previously hidden truth.

4. Who are the "apostles and prophets" mentioned in Ephesians 3:5? In this New Testament context, the "apostles and prophets" are not primarily referring to Old Testament prophets. Instead, Paul is likely referring to the apostles of Jesus Christ and individuals in the early church who were gifted with the spirit of prophecy (forth-telling God's revealed message and sometimes fore-telling). These individuals played a foundational role in understanding and communicating the gospel and this newly revealed mystery.

5. Why does Paul consider himself the "least of all the saints" (Ephesians 3:8)? Paul's description of himself as "the least of all the saints," even creating a unique Greek word for "least of the least," reflects his profound awareness of his past actions before his conversion. As someone who persecuted the early church, he felt deeply unworthy of being chosen as the one to proclaim the gospel and the mystery of Christ to the Gentiles. This isn't false humility but a genuine recognition of God's grace in selecting him despite his past.

6. What is the significance of the church in making known the "manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10)? Through the unified existence of the church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles as equal members in one body, God's multifaceted wisdom is made known even to the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (spiritual powers). The very unity and fellowship of this diverse community serve as a powerful demonstration of God's plan and a setback to forces that seek division. This highlights a cosmic role for the church in God's eternal purpose.

7. What does Paul mean when he says believers have "boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him" (Ephesians 3:12)? Because of their union with Christ and through faith in Him, believers have a freedom and confidence in approaching God without fear or intimidation. This boldness (*parrhesia* in Greek) signifies an unhindered ability to articulate and express their faith. This access is not to be limited by fear, including fear of demonic powers or societal pressures, especially for those in contexts where such fears might be prevalent.

8. What is the purpose of Paul's suffering in relation to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:13)? Paul's suffering as a "prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles" is not meant to discourage the Gentile believers. Rather, he assures them that his imprisonment is ultimately for their glory, signifying his commitment to the revelation and stewardship of the mystery that includes them. He doesn't want them to lose heart but to understand that his trials are part of God's plan to bring this unity to fruition.