

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

While today's Messianic people may have various critiques or criticisms of traditional Christian Trinitarianism, the presence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together on behalf of the redeemed—a tri-unity, or perhaps better a unity in plurality—is something that theologians and examiners have deduced from the Biblical text.

### Ephesians 3:9-11

#### “The Administration of the Mystery”

“and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the [assembly] to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.”

Paul was not only to proclaim Yeshua the Messiah to the nations,<sup>22</sup> but he was also called “to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things” (Ephesians 3:9, NIV), likely a parallel of Colossians 1:26.<sup>23</sup> Some have suggested that the cosmic language of the mystery of Messiah being kept hidden is Paul borrowing from the (proto-)Gnostics of Asia Minor, specifically in an attempt to emphasize Yeshua as the true Mystery. But the key more than anything else, as Foulkes explains, is “this was His purpose from the beginning of the creation, though in His wisdom He chose to reveal it to man in stages.”<sup>24</sup> Lincoln further remarks, “in the context of the ensuing mention of principalities and authorities, it functions as a reminder that God is able, because he is creator, to carry through his purpose of salvation as it affects all creation, including the rebellious powers.”<sup>25</sup> If indeed any kind of Gnostic language has been adapted by Paul, it is doubtless under the guise of him insisting that “the administration of the mystery” will be used by God to judge their sin.

Far be it from Paul wishing that only initiates into his gospel be among those who know Yeshua, *the mystery*, the administration given to him by the Lord laid forth a mission for His people. He says, “This is so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the [assembly] to the rulers and authorities in the heavens” (Ephesians 3:10, HCSB). Witherington indicates, “The overcoming of the barrier between Jews and Gentiles betokens the overcoming of such human and cosmic barriers in this universe. Christ will reconcile and pacify all. The existence of the [*ekklēsia*] heralds the victory of Christ over the cosmic powers.”<sup>26</sup>

The wisdom that God's people are to possess is His wisdom, described as being *polupoikilos* (πολυποίκιλος), which “**pert. to being diversified, (very) many-sided**” (BDAG).<sup>27</sup> Among all the things the *ekklēsia* has been called to be, a significant part of it is to be the vehicle by which God's great and awesome wisdom is known in the universe. The existence of the *ekklēsia* with Jewish and non-Jewish Believers as equals in the Messiah is not only a display of God's wisdom—in revealing the ultimate consequence of salvation having come. The *ekklēsia* is also to give testimony of God's wisdom—a wisdom that that will draw others to Yeshua and provide answers when people question their existence in the universe. It is a great and deep wisdom drawn from the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14) and which comes from the same power that

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<sup>22</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>23</sup> “[T]hat is, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints” (Colossians 1:26).

<sup>24</sup> Foulkes, 98.

<sup>25</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 185.

<sup>26</sup> Witherington, *Colossians-Philemon-Ephesians*, 267.

<sup>27</sup> BDAG, 847.

resurrected Yeshua from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20). Some commentators have suggested parallels between Ephesians 3:10 and thoughts expressed in the Dead Sea Scrolls:

“In his mysterious insight and glorious wisdom God has countenanced an era in which perversity triumphs, but at the time appointed for visitation He shall destroy such forever. Then shall truth come forth in victory upon the earth. Sullied by wicked ways while perversity rules, at the time of the appointed judgment truth shall be decreed. By His truth God shall then purify all human deeds, and refine some of humanity so as to extinguish every perverse spirit from the inward parts of the flesh, cleansing from every wicked deed by a holy spirit” (1QS 4.18-21).<sup>28</sup>

An important role of God’s people is to certainly call the world to repentance from its sin, but this is to be tempered by the love of God as “the kindness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4). Maxie D. Dunnam says, “When she [the *ekklēsia*] is true to her being, Christ Himself is present. His love flows from her corporate life. His forgiveness is expressed in the relationship of her members to each other and to those outside her fellowship. His justice and mercy are made visible in her ministry and mission to ‘the least of these.’”<sup>29</sup>

*Hē polupoikilos sophia tou Theou* (ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ), “the multifaceted wisdom of God” (NET), is something quite serious that relates to the service of God’s people, as opposed to just being the manifestation of His plan for the ages. It is something to which each Believer must pay serious heed. O’Brien remarks, “this variegated wisdom has particular reference to God’s richly diverse ways of working which led to a multiracial, multi-cultural community being united as fellow-members in the body of Christ.”<sup>30</sup> This is the olive tree of Israel (Romans 11:17), with the people making up a proverbial “olive salad” of both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers. This Body of Messiah plays an important part in the final redemption of Creation, as Paul describes earlier in 1 Corinthians 15:24-25: “...then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.” The restoration of Israel that is anticipated is to *later* be followed by the inauguration of the new Creation!

Dunnam, as a Christian pastor, asks “What would happen if the Christian church would get her mind around this claim of Paul—that all powers, all structures, all institutions, all systems can be redeemed—indeed that it is God’s plan to bring everything into harmony of His love in Jesus Christ?”<sup>31</sup> This is not describing some universal salvation for all, but instead that God’s people are to be an important vehicle of His redemption. **Yeshua already has enacted the final victory; the *ekklēsia* just has to seize on that opportunity!**

These thoughts represent how important it is for our Messianic faith community to grasp a hold at the teachings of the Epistle of Ephesians. Living out the mission of being an Israel maximized, while something certainly impressed upon us in the weekly Torah portions and Prophets of the Tanach, is not easily achieved in today’s generation of this movement. *We are not that able to recognize how Yeshua has final victory over the Devil, and for us to fulfill the purposes for which He has chosen us.* A serious problem with most of today’s Messianic movement is that we have a very fatalistic view of the world. This usually comes about by us subjecting our Almighty God to a date calendar for the end-times,<sup>32</sup> and thus living in fear of everything that goes on we do not perform the significant work of His Kingdom that we

<sup>28</sup> Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 131.

<sup>29</sup> Maxie D. Dunnam, *The Preacher’s Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Vol 31 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 181.

<sup>30</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 245.

<sup>31</sup> Dunnam, 182.

<sup>32</sup> For a further explanation, consult the FAQ, “6,000 Year Teaching.”

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should. Thankfully, however, various ministries and individuals are waking up to the reality that this course of action has negatively affected us, and are seeking to change the improper mentality that we have toward the Last Days.

The significant work of God's people is that they can live as a demonstration of His great wisdom and power—to *the whole of the universe!* This dimension is the theater in which God will conquer evil, and humankind plays a significant role in the unfolding drama. We must remember from Genesis that when He finished His creative activity, the Lord said "it was very good" (Genesis 1:31), *tov meod* (טֹב מְאֹד)—but He did not say that it was perfect! And why was Creation not perfect? Because Satan and the angels had already fallen, and even though the universe was very good, evil was already present. Something was off-kilter even in the Garden of Eden, the paradise that it was. Creationist author Hugh Ross describes,

"God created the universe and all life in the universe not just for the benefit of humanity but for the benefit of His angelic and future creations as well. The Bible reveals that Satan and his followers, or demons, introduced evil before Adam and Eve rebelled in Eden. We can infer from Romans 8 and Revelation 20-22 that God created the universe for the purpose of conquering all evil once and for all."<sup>33</sup>

When all evil is finally conquered and the saints can finally enter into that New Heavens and New Earth, then it will be vanquished to the Lake of Fire in its own dimension entirely independent of the saints (cf. Revelation 20:11).<sup>34</sup>

Lincoln's thoughts on the universal implications for the *ekklēsia* and Ephesians 3:10 are well taken:

"The writer's thought is, therefore, best understood as being that by her very existence as the new humanity, in which the major division of the first-century world has been overcome, the Church [meaning, the assembly/*ekklēsia*] reveals God's secret in action and heralds to the hostile heavenly powers the overcoming of cosmic divisions with their defeat...The syncretism combated in Colossians appears to have claimed that it was necessary for believers to placate the powers controlling the heavenly realm, in order to gain access to mysteries. The reflections of the writer to the Ephesians move in quite the reverse direction. The mystery is disclosed in the Church and through her is being made known to these very powers that their malign régime, particularly over that part of humanity, the Gentile world, thought to be especially under their sway, has come to an end."<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, the sway of demonic powers over the world should have come to an end via the work of Messiah Yeshua and the existence of His redeemed people! As a Messianic movement looking for direction for the future, let us walk in knowing that the *ekklēsia* can indeed be an Israel maximized to be all of the things that our Heavenly Father called Ancient Israel to be: **a light to the world and a testament of His goodness to all.**

The significance of God's people being a testament of His great wisdom to all Creation is described by Paul as being "according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11, RSV). The *ekklēsia* fulfilling such a role was a part of God's *prothesin tōn aiōnōn* (πρόθεσις τῶν αἰώνων) or "purpose of the ages" (YLT). As God's people today, are we not aware of the fact that we are to prepare the way for not only Yeshua's return to Earth to reign during the Millennium—but ultimately His rule over the entire universe (Ephesians 1:10)?

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<sup>33</sup> Ross, *The Genesis Question*, 57.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos: The Extra-Dimensionality of God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996), pp 186-190.

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