

- **THE PLAN MADE KNOWN THROUGH PAUL AND THE CHURCH** Ephesians 3:8-10
 - **What are the Riches of Christ?** (Ephesians 3:8)
 - The Word Commentary: *"The riches of Christ" ... (Paul's) dependence on the thought of Col 2:3, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and Col 1:27, "the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ among you," make it far more likely that...Christ himself constitutes the content of the riches of the gospel, and the wealth of the salvation to be found in him is unfathomable.*¹
 - N.T. Wright translates "Riches of Christ" as *"The king's wealth" ... "Being a Christian is meant to consist of going from room to room in the king's palace, relishing the beauty and splendour of it all...a delighted exploration of the untold and inexhaustible riches (and God)...has opened the door to the heavenly throne room itself...(for) free and confident access to God himself."*²
 - **(Revealed) Through The Church:** (Ephesians 3:10a)
 - What word best describes the role of the Body of Christ in the revealing of God's secret plan..."peripheral" or "central"?
 - N.T. Wright: *"one of the New Testament's most powerful statements of the reason for the church's existence: the rulers and authorities must be confronted with God's wisdom, in all its rich variety, and this is to happen through the church!...namely, the community in which men, women and children of every race, colour, social, and cultural background come together in glad worship of the one true God.*³
 - **Rulers and authorities in heavenly places** (Ephesians 3:10b)
 - Who are they?
 - *"But since other references make clear that for Ephesians the spiritual powers are evil forces who need to be subjected (2:2; 6:12)...the church is the means by which God makes known his wisdom to the powers...the church reveals God's secret in action and heralds to the hostile heavenly powers the overcoming of cosmic divisions with their defeat"*⁴
 - *"...both the earthly authorities and their shadowy heavenly counterparts."*⁵
 - Are there good forces also watching?
 - 1 Peter 1:12b?
 - What is being made known to them by the Church? (v 10a)

¹ Word Biblical Commentary – Ephesians: Volume 42.

² N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Epistles* (Louisville, KY, WJK, 2004) 36,37.

³ Ibid., 36

⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 185,186.

⁵ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Epistles* (Louisville, KY, WJK, 2004) 36, 37.

- **Might a “theatre/play” metaphor be used to describe how the church makes known the “wisdom of God” to the Cosmos. If this metaphor resonates with you:**

- In Regina, what venue might you imagine? Darke Hall? Mosaic Stadium? Globe Theatre?
- Who would be: The Playwright? The Prompter? The Principle Actor? The supporting Actors? The Audience?
- Might the play be staged 24/7?
- Might the actors be real congregations overcoming, conquering, and sometimes succumbing to temptation?
- Might there be audience participation for better or worse with the actors?

- **FOR THIS REASON I BOW MY KNEES** (Ephesians 3:14-17)

- What might have been the initial reaction of the Ephesians to the Church being so central to God’s plan? Humbled? Inspired? Overwhelmed? Driven to prayer?
- **Strengthened** Ephesians 3:16
 - *“In the Greco-Roman world, power was often seen as an impersonal force (like electricity) that could be manipulated, harnessed, or controlled. The power of God comes to his people by means of a **relationship**—a relationship with God by virtue of union with the exalted Christ and with the Holy Spirit residing in each believer.”⁶*
 - *“**κραταιόω** ‘to strengthen’; derived fr. **κραταιός**; a later form of **κρατύνω**. I **become strong**. In the physical sense. In the psychological sense of encouragement to remain firm...“**Spirit and power often go together** passim in commentaries, with the emphasis being on this extraordinary enablement...The reference is to **the core character of our whole person**,...It is understanding now brought to action,...”⁷*
 - Would Paul’s prayer have reassured the Ephesians? Does it reassure you?
 - Would you describe this “strengthening” as: Helping your strength? Empowerment with God’s power?
 - Does Paul mention this same “power” elsewhere in the letter to the Ephesians? (Eph. 1:19,20)

- **UNITED IN THE SPIRIT** (Ephesians 4:1-6)

- What traits should the Ephesians express toward their differences? (v.1,2)
- Who in the Trinity is needed for unifying the diverse people of the Body of Christ...of a congregation? (v.3,4)
- What core belief unites the Body of Christ? Denominations? Congregations? (V. 5)

⁶ Romans to Philemon: Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Volume 3, Cited by Annabel Robinson

⁷ Annabel Robinson, email 210422

- John Stott: “As God is “*unsplitable*”, so the invisible church is to be “*unsplitable*” (a reference to the oneness of God and the Body in 4:4-6). Believers must look for ways to maintain **visible or tangible unity as well** (conveyed by the Greek as opposed to the “invisible” spiritual unity).”⁸
- In your opinion, how has the Body of Christ done with this teaching through the centuries?
- In your lifetime, what has been the most impactful example of diverse Christians living this unity in the Spirit?
- **THE GIFTS CHRIST GAVE TO THE CHURCH** (Ephesians 4:11-16)
 - What gifts did Jesus give to the church after his ascension? (v.11)
 - “(Paul underscores) the importance of the leaders and ministers of the Word. They are depicted as the bounty which flows to the Church as the result of the triumph of the ascended Lord”.⁹
 - **The full stature of Christ** (Ephesians 4:13)
 - “...But the expression “measure of the stature” functions as a metaphor of spiritual advancement. Paul wants all believers not only to grow, but to attain the “**size**” of Christ, that is, to reflect his virtues and likeness in their lives. The gifted leaders are to follow Paul’s example in his ministry to the Galatians when he said, “I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal 4:19).¹⁰
- **KNIT TOGETHER BY EVERY LIGAMENT** (Ephesians 4:16)
 - **Ligament**
 - What did medical science believe about the ligaments role in the body in Paul’s time?
 - “(ligament)refers to the joinings, the junctures...contiguous links...means of support and supply for other parts of the body...the ligaments are the ministers, (they) will provide connections between the other parts and mediate the energizing power.”¹¹
 - **Equipped**
 - For the interpretation of passages using this verb (equipped)...it is well to explore the possibility of connection with the Gr-Rom. cultural background of generous public service...like sponsoring in today’s culture. A well-to-do citizen would pay for a play to be performed or for some other event for the public benefit...¹²
 - What does Paul see as a result of this “equipping”? (v.16)
 - 35 years later...how was the Ephesian congregation doing? Was it full of love? (Revelation 2:4)
 - Do Christians find it difficult both to love God and others consistently in a generous way? Do you? Why?

⁸ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1979), 152-155.

⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990) 267.

¹⁰ Annabel Robinson, email 210422

¹¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990) 263, 266.

¹² Annabel Robinson, email 210422