

# *Ephesians*

## *The Mystery of the Gospel*

Lesson #6 for August 5, 2023

Scriptures: Ephesians 3; Job 11:5-9; Ezekiel 43:13-16; Amos 7:7-8; Revelation 11:1-2.

1. Ephesians 3 is packed with many ideas which have deep implications. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul indicated that he had been commissioned by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles. **He suggested that Gentiles and Jews together will form the final church of God and demonstrate to the onlooking universe that it is possible for people who have been alienated and opposed to each other to come together in God's plan as His united family.** Even so, Paul recognized that he was in a Roman prison because of his desire to preach the gospel to Gentiles.
2. Read Ephesians 3.

**Ephesians 3:1-21:** <sup>1</sup> This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup>for surely **you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you,** <sup>3</sup>and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, <sup>4</sup>a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup>In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as **it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:** <sup>6</sup>that is, **the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.**

<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup>Although I am the very least of all the saints, **this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ,** <sup>9</sup>and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup>so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup>This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup>in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him. <sup>13</sup>I pray therefore that you may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

*[Prayer for the Readers]*

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, <sup>17</sup>and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup>I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ

that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. [How much does that include?]

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.—*New Revised Standard Version*.<sup>\*†‡</sup>

3. As outlined in the teachers Bible study guide, this study highlights three major themes.
  1. Paul's prayer and ideal for the church was to view the church as the new humanity, including the Gentiles [and the angels].
  2. The inclusion of the Gentiles was God's great mystery and surprise to humanity. Paul was the humble steward of this mystery. [Paul wanted to include not only the Gentiles but also beings from the entire universe!]
  3. Because of the inclusion of the Gentiles, and thus of all humanity in the plan of salvation, the church became the display of God's wisdom, love, power, and glory, both on earth and throughout the universe.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 80.‡
4. Ephesians 3 begins with Paul telling the Ephesians that he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ.
5. What do you think Paul was trying to say by claiming that he was a "prisoner of Jesus Christ"? Was he suggesting that he was imprisoned because of Jesus Christ? Or, that he was somehow in God's hands, and it really did not matter what Rome/Nero did to him? Compare Ephesians 4:1 where he was also called a prisoner.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Paul's mention of his "suffering" (*Eph. 3:13, ESV*), and his later mention of his chains (*Eph. 6:20, ESV*), suggest that he is not under relatively comfortable house arrest (*compare Acts 28:16*) but is in prison. Being in prison in the first century and in a Roman dungeon was especially challenging. The Roman Empire did not run well-organized prisons with sanitary facilities and regular meal service. In fact, the empire had little need for prisons since incarceration was not used as a means of punishment. People were placed in prison only while they awaited trial or execution. Prisoners were expected to provide for themselves and were dependent on relatives and friends to supply food and other needs.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Sunday, July 30.‡§

6. Even though Paul was a prisoner when he first arrived in Rome, it appears that at that time he had relative freedom and was allowed to be under house arrest.

**Acts 28:16:** When we arrived in Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with a soldier guarding him.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*\* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Acts 28:16). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].‡
7. Even this would be considered a terrible shame and a social disgrace in the context of an honor/shame culture.

8. When we read what Paul wrote in Ephesians, it sounds like he was in a very restrictive prison at that time. But, he believed that he was about to be released from prison.
9. How would you feel if you had a personal friend who was a pastor, that friend was in prison, and he sent you a letter saying that he was in prison for your sake?
10. What can give Christians hope even if they are under this kind of stressful situation? This is the reason for constantly keeping the perspective of the great controversy over the character and government of God on everything that happens. We know who the eventual winner is going to be; so, we need to place our trust in Him.
11. In Ephesians 3:1-6, **Paul mentioned that Gentiles are to become fellow heirs with Jews, members of the same body, and are to share in the promise from Christ Jesus through the gospel.**

[BSG:] First, Paul writes this part of the letter specifically to Gentile believers in the house churches of Ephesus (*Eph. 3:1*) [and the surrounding areas].

Second, Paul claims to be the recipient of something he labels “the stewardship of God’s grace,” given to him “for you,” for Gentile believers (*Eph. 3:2, ESV*). This stewardship, or this ministry of grace, is Paul’s way of describing the commission given to him to preach the gospel (“God’s grace”) to the Gentiles (*compare Eph. 3:7, 8, ESV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Monday, July 31.<sup>‡§</sup> [What a change for Paul!]<sup>‡</sup>

12. **Remember that Paul was later arrested in Jerusalem because he was seen on the streets associating with Gentiles; and then, he was accused of taking them into the temple in Jerusalem! Unfortunately, even his fellow apostles, some of whom were former disciples of Christ, did not stand up for Paul to prevent this from happening. (See *The Acts of the Apostles 400-405*.) Why were the church leaders so prejudiced against Paul?**

**Ephesians 3:7-10:** <sup>7</sup> I was made a servant of the gospel by God’s special gift, which he gave me through the working of his power. <sup>8</sup>I am less than the least of all God’s people; yet God gave me this privilege of taking to the Gentiles the Good News about the infinite riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and of making all people see how God’s secret plan is to be put into effect. **God, who is the Creator of all things, kept his secret hidden through all the past ages, <sup>10</sup>in order that at the present time, by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.**—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

13. What do you think the angels thought as they watched the Jews despising Gentiles and Gentiles despising Jews? Then, what did they think when, suddenly, a “Pharisee of the Pharisees” who had been foremost in promoting the special privileges of Jews had been busy hunting down Christian believers was spreading the gospel not only to Jews but also especially to Gentiles? Don’t you think they were rejoicing when that happened?
14. What did Paul think when God had a personal message for him through Ananias?

**Acts 9:15-16:** <sup>15</sup>The Lord said to him [Ananias], “Go, because I have chosen him [Paul] to serve me, to make my name known to **Gentiles** and kings and to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup>And I myself will show him all that he must suffer for my sake.”—*Good News Bible*.\*††

15. Paul claimed that it was his ministry to teach that all God’s people, in fact, that **all human beings** were supposed to be a part of God’s plan to be united and to live with the angels in heaven for eternity. He knew that would not happen; but, it was God’s original plan.
16. So, Paul described Christ as breaking down the barriers that had separated Jews and Gentiles.
17. He was probably thinking about the 4-foot-high wall around the central part of the temple in Jerusalem displaying notices in Greek and Latin at various places along that wall saying that anyone who was not a Jew would die if he stepped inside that wall.
18. While Paul claimed to be the special messenger to Gentiles, he believed that God’s message was intended to go to all peoples, even in Old Testament times.
19. He believed that Jews and Gentiles could join together in perfect unity to become co-heirs, co-bodied as it were, and co-partakers of the gospel promise. This new community would include not only Jews and Gentiles but would also include the entire universe.
20. Are there barriers which separate people in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in our day? What can we do to break down those barriers?

**Ephesians 3:7-13:** <sup>7</sup> I was made a servant of the gospel by God’s special gift, which he gave me through the working of his power. <sup>8</sup>**I am less than the least of all God’s people; yet God gave me this privilege of taking to the Gentiles the Good News about the infinite riches of Christ,** <sup>9</sup>**and of making all people see how God’s secret plan is to be put into effect. God, who is the Creator of all things, kept his secret hidden through all the past ages,** <sup>10</sup>**in order that at the present time, by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.** <sup>11</sup>God did this according to his eternal purpose, which he achieved through Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup>In union with Christ and through our faith in him we have the boldness to go into God’s presence with all confidence. <sup>13</sup>I beg you, then, not to be discouraged because I am suffering for you; it is all for your benefit.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

21. ***This passage raises several questions: (1) Why did Paul say that he was less than the least of all God’s people? (2) Who are the angelic rulers and powers? (3) What could they possibly learn from us? (4) Had the universe ever seen God deal with sinners before sin came to our world? Remember, there had already been the war in heaven as recorded in Revelation 12:7-12.***

[BSG:] There is an interesting progression in Paul’s self-understanding that is discernible as we move through Paul’s letters in the order they were written. Early on, he lays claim to his status as a divinely appointed apostle (*Gal. 1:1*). Later, though, he introduces himself as “the least of the apostles”

and “not worthy to be called an apostle” (1 Cor. 15:9, NKJV). Here in Ephesians he sees himself as “the very least of all the saints” (Eph. 3:8, ESV). Finally, he describes himself as the “chief” (NKJV) or “worst” of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15, NIV).

Perhaps this line of thinking here by Paul can help explain this famous quote by Ellen G. White [from *Steps to Christ* which is reproduced immediately below].—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, August 1.<sup>‡§</sup>  
[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ\** 64.2.<sup>‡</sup>

**22. *Could it be that bringing together Gentiles and Jews and making them into one united family was a warning even to the demonic rulers that God’s ultimate plan to bring the universe back into harmony was being fulfilled?***

[BSG:] If so, the composition of the church, **unifying Jews and Gentiles** as once very divided parts of humankind, becomes a ringing announcement to these demonic “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” of God’s plan for the future, “to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10, ESV). They are put on notice that God’s plan is underway and their doom assured. The very nature of a unified church signals their ultimate defeat.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, August 1.<sup>‡Ω§</sup>

23. Are we taking this unifying message from Paul seriously? Are we constantly aware that God is trying to use us to demonstrate His grace, His forgiveness, and His love to sinners? He is doing this as a demonstration not only for the angels who have remained faithful to Him but also for those of us humans who rebelled. This is early proof to them that God will successfully complete His mission on earth and unite His family on earth with His family in heaven! **God is winning the great controversy!**

24. Read Ephesians 1:6-19 and Ephesians 3:14-19. In these two prayer passages, Paul talked about how God through His power and the Holy Spirit had called Jews and especially Gentiles into the wonderful blessings He had promised to His people. They are to become unified. When they come to understand God’s love, it will transform them.

**Ephesians 3:14-19:** <sup>14</sup> For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. <sup>16</sup>I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, <sup>17</sup>and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, <sup>18</sup>so that you, together with all God’s people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ’s love. <sup>19</sup>Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.—*Good*

*News Bible*.\* [Ellen White described that as “partakers of the Divine nature.”]‡

[BSG:] Behind the English translations of Ephesians 3:14, 15 is an important play on words. When Paul says that he bows before “the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (*ESV*), he is exploring the phonetic connection between the Greek word for *Father*, *patēr*, and the Greek term for *family*, *patria*. In Ephesians, Paul celebrates the comprehensive nature of God’s plan of salvation, which involves all things (*Eph. 1:9, 10*) for all time (*Eph. 1:21*). And here he lays claim to “every family in heaven and on earth” as belonging to “the Father.” Every family (*patria*) takes its name from the Father (*patēr*). This is very good news!

Ponder this thought: Your family, despite its imperfections and failings, belongs to God. Your family is not in the cruel grip of fate but in God’s caring hands. God loves imperfect families. They bear the divine name. They carry the mark of His ownership.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, August 2.‡§

25. Earlier, in the prayer recorded in Ephesians 1:15-23, Paul reminded his listeners—or his readers—that when it is all finished, Christ will be exalted to be Ruler over everything in the entire universe. Where does that put us as part of the Christian “temple”?

**Ephesians 1:15-23:** <sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, <sup>16</sup>I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you. I remember you in my prayers <sup>17</sup>and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him. <sup>18</sup>I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, <sup>19</sup>and how very great is his power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup>which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world. <sup>21</sup>Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. <sup>22</sup>God put all things under Christ’s feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. <sup>23</sup>The church is Christ’s body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere.—*Good News Bible*.\*

26. **We are the most privileged people who have ever lived on this earth. We have the Scriptures, and we have the writings of Ellen White. Furthermore, we could be the people who will see Jesus come back to this earth!**

[EGW:] How can we harmonize our dwarfed spiritual condition with the presentation of our text [Ephesians 3:14-19] that describes the fullness of knowledge it is our privilege to possess? How can Heaven look upon us, who have had every spiritual and temporal advantage that we might grow

in grace, when we have not improved our opportunities? The apostle did not write these words to tantalize us, to deceive us, or to raise our expectations only to have them disappointed in our experience. He wrote these words to show us what we may and must be, if we would be heirs of the kingdom of God. How can we be laborers together with God, if we have a dwarfed experience? We have a knowledge of the Christian's privilege, and should seek for that deep, spiritual understanding in the things of God that the Lord has desired us to have.

Do we really believe the Bible? Do we really believe that we may attain to the knowledge of God that is presented before us in this text? Do we believe every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? Do we believe the words that have been spoken by prophets and apostles, by Jesus Christ, who is the author of all light and blessing, and in whom dwelleth all richness and fullness? Do we really believe in God, and in His Son?—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*,\* October 1, 1889, par. 2-3.†

27. **After assuring the Gentiles that they are to be a part of God's chosen people along with the Jews, Paul assured them that this was not a new idea. This has been God's plan since before the world was created! (Ephesians 3:11)**
28. From time to time in his writings in the book of Ephesians and elsewhere, Paul interrupted himself and gave a brief doxology, praising God for what he was writing about.

**Ephesians 3:20-21:** <sup>20</sup> To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: <sup>21</sup>to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, for ever [sic] and ever! Amen.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

[BSG:] Paul has been recording his prayers for believers (*Eph. 3:14–19*). Now he prays directly and powerfully. **Paul's doxology raises two questions: 1. Does the passage inappropriately elevate the church, placing it on a par with Christ, in the phrase "to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus" (*Eph. 3:21, ESV*)? While Paul is highly interested in the church in Ephesians, it is clear that Christ is the Savior of the church since it is Christ who dwells in the hearts of believers (*Eph. 3:17*). In the doxology, Paul praises God for the salvation [or healing] offered to the church through Christ Jesus.**

2. Does the phrase "throughout all generations, forever and ever" (*Eph. 3:21, ESV*) portray an unending, earthbound future for the church, with the return of Christ put on hold? Ephesians exhibits a robust expectation for the future. For example, Ephesians 4:30 looks toward "the day of redemption" (*ESV*). Also, believers will experience Christ's limitless, sovereign power in "the age to come" (*Eph. 1:21, NRSV*). **Paul's doxology should be read as a celebration of Christ's unending power exercised on behalf of believers.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Thursday, August 3.†§ [Do we remember the blessings God gives us and thank Him often?]†

29. When reading these passages from Paul, one of the challenges for Christians in our day is to understand what God's plan for the "Israel-church" relationship was and is. Many different ideas have been expressed. Some of those ideas follow in this long quotation from the teachers Bible study guide.

[BSG:] The discussion on the Jews and the Gentiles, united in Christ's body, raises the issue of the relationship between the [Christian] church and Israel. Christians have developed different models of the Israel-church relation. One traditional position is that Israel was God's covenant nation, but that after Israel as a nation rejected Jesus as the Messiah, Israel as a nation was rejected and was replaced by the church. Therefore, after Christ, Israel does not fulfill any role in God's economy of salvation. Other theologians took a "literalistic interpretation" of Scripture and developed the **dispensational theory**: that Israel and the church represent two different peoples of God. These peoples have different calls, different covenants, different paths to salvation, and different purposes in the economy of salvation. [Was there a different plan of salvation in the Old Testament?]

Even a cursory reading of Paul and of the New Testament reveals that both these theories are problematic and that the **dispensationalist approach to the Israel-church relation is especially contrary to what the apostle envisioned**. Several major points of Paul's view on the Israel-church relation could be made here. **First, Paul viewed an essential continuity between Israel and the church**. This relationship is to be understood in the context of the overarching biblical interpretative principle of promise-fulfillment: Christ and the New Testament people of God are the fulfillment of God's promises in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God saved Israel and called it to proclaim God's covenants and promises of grace in the world. Through Israel, God's call to receive His promises of grace and to join His covenants were to reach all the families and nations of the earth. **Israel's was not a mission of imperial development in which Israel was to conquer and annex all the nations of the earth. Rather, the nations were expected to join God's covenant and promises, as opposed to joining a national or an imperial entity**. The Old Testament, therefore, was looking forward to a supranational structure of God's people, in which people of all nations would be part of the same covenant with God (*Gen. 12:1-3, 1 Kings 8:41-43, Isa. 56:3-7, Isa. 60:3*). This supranational structure was fulfilled in the New Testament people of God composed of both Jews and Gentiles. **[Clearly, it was and is God's plan that Jews and Gentiles are to join God's universal family and become one people.]**

**Second**, and consequently, **Israel and the church are not two peoples of God that coexist in parallel**, each of them with their covenants, paths to salvation, and missions. Rather, Christ explained that His mission was to "bring" His "other sheep that are not in this fold" so that "they will become one flock, with one shepherd" (*John 10:16, NASB*). **Nor is the church**



**simply the replacement of Israel as a nation**, in the sense that Israel was the nation of God until Christ, and now, after Christ rejected Israel as a nation, the church is the new people of God. Rather, for Paul, the church is not a different people of God but the fulfillment of the amazing promise of God in the Old Testament: **He calls all humanity to His grace**. That is why, in Romans 9, Paul views the church as comprised of both Jews and Gentiles (*Rom. 9:23–26*). **[In Romans 9-11, Paul talked about the Jews.]**

**True, only a remnant of Israel joined the community gathered around Jesus (*Rom. 9:27–29*), but it is precisely this remnant that shows that God did not reject Israel’s taking part in the church (*Rom. 11:1*). It is this remnant that ensures the continuity and unity between Israel and the church.** For this reason, in Romans 11:16–18, **Paul compares the church with the olive tree: some branches are the children of Israel, and other branches are the Gentiles, but all the branches ultimately are fed by the same root; that is, God’s covenant with Abraham.** God always had one plan of salvation, one Seed who was Christ, one promise, one covenant, and one people. [Review again Genesis 12:1-3.]

This same idea of the one plan of God, the continuity between Israel and the church, and therefore the essentiality of the unity of the church resurfaces again in Ephesians 2 and 3. Paul explains to the Ephesians that the church is comprised both of “circumcised” and “uncircumcised” (*Eph. 2:11*). The apostle does not say that the Jews and the church are two separate peoples or that the church replaced the Jews as God’s people. Far from excluding the Jews from the church, Paul follows Jesus’ theology and affirms that salvation comes from the Jews (*John 4:22*). For this reason, Paul emphasizes that, while the Gentiles were “far away,” the Jews were “near” (*Eph. 2:17, NASB*). Elsewhere, Paul described this “nearness” in terms of having received God’s promises or covenants, God’s prophecies, the Messiah, and God’s mission to share them all with the world (*Rom. 9:4, 5*). **Thus, it is the Gentiles who were brought near to God and built on the same foundation of the Hebrew prophets, as opposed to building on the foundation of their old myths or philosophies.**

[This unity between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles was necessary because God’s ultimate plan was and is to bring the entire universe together in harmony, peace, and love. That must have seemed impossible to the onlooking universe at that point in time! How do you see the world in our day? **Does it seem like God is making any progress in producing a unified, loving family on this earth?**]

**Third**, even when speaking of the foundation of the church, Paul uses the **same idea of the continuity of Israel and the church**, this time in terms of revelation. The church is built on divine revelation. But God does not have two discontinuous revelations, the Old and the New Testaments. He did not reveal something in the Old Testament only to abandon His plan and reveal

a totally new project. His plan is one, and His revelation is one and continuous. That is why **Paul emphasizes that the church is built on both the apostles and the prophets** (*Eph. 2:20*; see also John's description of the New Jerusalem wherein the apostles' names are inscribed on the foundation of the city, and the names of the patriarchs are inscribed on the gates; yet the apostles and the patriarchs are integrated in the same New Jerusalem, God's dwelling place, *Rev. 21:10–14*). The reason for listing the apostles first is perhaps that the apostles are "greater" than the prophets in the same sense that John the Baptist was greater than all the prophets. This "greatness" is to be understood in the same sense of promise-fulfillment: while **the prophets prophesied the coming of the Messiah, the apostles announced His real historical advent in the world**. The Messiah whom the apostles proclaimed as having come into the world was the same Messiah seen by the prophets in their visions. The apostles and the prophets were united in their testimony, which is the foundation of the church....

**Fourth**, Paul's view of the Israel-church relation also reveals his understanding of the identity and character of God. **The God of Israel is not their national God; He is the God of the whole earth [and the entire universe]**. While His earthly residence may be in Jerusalem, His jurisdiction is not limited to Judea and the surrounding areas. Rather, the God of the Christians has His throne in the heavenly places or sanctuary and has authority over any power on earth and in heaven (*Matt. 6:10, Matt. 28:18, Eph. 1:21*) because He is the Creator and the Redeemer of the entire world. That is why God calls the whole world to return to Him, receive His grace, and live in His kingdom.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 80-83.<sup>†‡§</sup>

30. So, what is God's purpose for the church?

[BSG:] In Ephesians 3:10, Paul affirms that the church is the means through which God reveals His wisdom "to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (*ESV*).... In your understanding, is the church a revelation of God's plan of salvation to the entire universe? How so? How is the unity in the church in Christ, unity between the Gentiles and the Jews, unity in families and in society an essential part of the saving revelation of the grace and power of God?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 83.<sup>†§</sup>

31. Are we thankful every day for this unifying message that includes us, imperfect as we are? God wants us to be a part of His heavenly family.

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