

# Kingdom Family Mystery

## Ephesians 3:1-6

### Ephesians 3:1-6 (NASB)

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel

Mystery creates suspense in us and demands our attention because it taps into our longing for resolution.

Neil Armstrong said that:

**"Mystery creates wonder and wonder is the basis of man's desire to understand." – Neil Armstrong**

In today's passage, Paul is making reference to God's, "mysterious plan"...

- The fact that God's plan would be "MYSTERIOUS" creates a suspense for us...

There are two "types" of suspense that we are familiar with.

1. Wondering WHAT is going to happen.
2. Wondering HOW is is going to happen.

When it is announced that an actor has signed a contract for 3 sequels to a popular film, NOBODY goes to those next movies wondering WHAT is going to happen.

**We already know that Jack Sparrow won't die...**

- We're not wondering, "Gosh, I hope captain Jack makes it out alive!"
- No, we sit and wonder "how's he going to get out of this one?"

The suspense in the O.T. is like the suspense in a multi-sequel film...

- We knew WHAT God was going to do—God was going to redeem all of His creation.
- They just didn't understand HOW He was going to pull it off—that was a mystery.

**In our passage today the Apostle Paul appeals to our interest in mysteries, and he helps us connect the last several months of our study in Ephesians 1 & 2 to God's "mysterious plan".**

Paul is not telling this to the church in order to be creative or clever—remember that Paul is writing this from JAIL.

- Paul does NOT explain this as a mystery in order to entertain us...
- NO—he explains it to us because this mystery has the power to CHANGE us and CHANGE our communities!

**Many of us probably think that the Lord is very mysterious.**

- After all, “The Lord works in mysterious ways” is probably one of the most-often quoted Bible verses—even though it’s not even in the Bible.

And while many people think that the Lord DOES move in mysterious ways, the book of Ephesians tells us the opposite.

- God ALWAYS works in accordance with His character as revealed by the Gospel.

**The mystery has been REVEALED!**

Here is the mystery in our passage today:

**Ephesians 3:4-6 (NASB)**

**By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel**

**This mystery is revealed JESUS—look at v 4.**

This is in line with the thesis-statement he gives for the entire book of Ephesians back in Ch1:9-10.

- We knew WHAT God was going to do—the mystery was in HOW He would do it.
- And we see in our passage—and throughout the NT—that God fulfills his plan through Jesus.

**Ephesians 1:9-10 (NASB)**

**He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth in Him.**

Because sin has entered the world, everything is falling apart.

- **God’s plan is to bring everything back together in Jesus.**

And this is what we see in our passage today—look at v6 again:

**Ephesians 3:6— the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel**

Remember that Gentiles are non-Jews—they don’t follow the law or make sacrifices to God, etc...

- This means that they are SEPARATED from the Jews—socially, religiously, in all ways.

Paul is saying that the Gentiles and Jews are now made ONE in Jesus.

- We are all made into a new humanity in Jesus
- We are made into ONE in Christ.

Jesus brings RADICALLY divided and different peoples together.

- In doing this, He shows the reconciling power of the Gospel.
- This power—this reconciliation—will eventually reach throughout ALL the earth!

So what is this mystery?

- This mystery of the Gospel is Jesus uniting people into a multi-ethnic, multi-national, economically diverse Kingdom Family and using His Family to unite **all** things in Him.

This SHOULDN'T have been a mystery to God's people—God TOLD us He would do this through the Messiah.

God has been open about His plan to include the Gentiles throughout the OT!

- God promised ALL NATIONS would be blessed through Abraham's nation.
- God promised that the Messiah would receive the nations as His inheritance.
- That Israel would be given as a light to the nations.
- That the Nations would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and "flow to it" like a mighty river.

**This is no longer a mystery—it has been revealed.**

- We don't have to guess about what God is like...
- We don't waste time wondering if God is going to do anything about the brokenness in the world.
- It's not a mystery whether God loves you or not.
- We don't need to question if God has given up on us or not.
- We don't need to question whether God is willing to sacrifice for our good.

***This isn't a mystery to anyone who's read the Bible***

- God TOLD us He would do this through the Messiah.
- But here we see Paul getting all CRAZY and excited on what God has done in Jesus!

**GOD revealed this mystery TO US— HE HAD TO or we could never figure it out on our own!**

- It's a mystery until we receive God's revelation of it—we would NEVER figure it out...
- We'd never guess that God's strength and victory would come through utter weakness.
- We'd never guess God would bring His kingdom to earth by becoming a servant.
- We'd never figure out that God would reclaim all by giving all...

We'd have NEVER guessed this, but this is exactly what God has done through Jesus.

- This is not intuitive...it seems strange to our wisdom...

- There are no secrets to Christianity—everything is out in the open.
- There are no restricted places reserved for "more holy" people...

**All love and privilege and access and power is open and available for all to receive and for all to see.**

The Gospel is GOOD NEWS—you can understand it, receive it, be changed by it, enjoy it...

- But it retains a touch of mystery—even though you KNOW the Gospel.
- We can't FULLY comprehend it—it is vast and endless and unending...
- God is infinitely compassionate—You can KNOW His compassion, but you can't EXHAUST it.
- God is infinitely righteous—you can know His righteousness, but you will never find the end of it.
- God is infinitely generous—this doesn't mean that you can't know His generosity—but you can't comprehend the fullness of his Generosity.

**"Mystery is not a doubt-filled skepticism of the unknown, but an awe-filled wonder of the inexhaustible."—C.S. Lewis**

This is why Paul was moved to declare:

**Romans 11:33**

**Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**

Theologian Karl Barth:

**“The Gospel is not the mystery of incomprehensible darkness, but the mystery of incomprehensible light. It is not that we see so little of what God has done that we are puzzled, but that in the light of God’s revelation in Christ we see so much of what God has done that we are dazzled.”—Karl Barth**

We KNOW God is restoring all things to Himself—He has told us that is what he’s doing.

**So if this mystery has been revealed in Jesus, is there any mystery left?**

- It’s not a mystery WHO He would accomplish this plan through—that’s Jesus.
- It’s not even HOW he will do this
  - We KNOW He does this by Jesus’ death, resurrection and His Spirit-Empowered Church.
- The mystery is not even WHY He would do it
  - we know God does all things for His glory and our good.

The only real mysteries left are:

1. WHEN this plan will be completed... and
2. How we will live as the Church in light of this plan.

**When will this be completed? We do not know, exactly...**

- WHEN is not ours to know—it is God’s to reveal.

**BUT, how will we live as the church in light of God’s plan??**

- **This has EVERYTHING to do with us!**
  - **God’s plan affects us—it CHANGES us...**
  - **And we participate in God’s plan!**

**Ephesians 3:6 (NASB)— the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel**

**Ephesians 3:6 (NLT)**

**And this is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.**

**God has chosen and adopted us into His family through our faith in Jesus.**

- We are KIDS in God’s family.
- We are SIBLINGS together in Jesus.
- We have received and continue to walk in love.
- We are able to give and encourage others in this love.

Who we are in Jesus affects EVERYTHING about us.

**Part of the mystery Paul is revealing is that the Kingdom of God is looks like FAMILY.**

- In Christ, we are adopted into God’s family—members of the same family.
- As members of God’s family we all have the same access and privilege.
- There is no longer a distinction between “near” and “far”

God brings us ALL to Himself through Jesus.—there is no 2nd class citizen.

- People with more money aren’t JUUUUST a little bit better (airline analogy)
- People with a certain religious background aren’t placed a LITTLE higher than others...

We are made FAMILY—God's family.

- God, our father, has made us His own children through Jesus.
- **And like a good, generous, responsible father, God has amassed for us an INHERITANCE.**

This inheritance is not a “what”—as we might tend to think of when we hear the word...

- God doesn't die and leave us with \$\$ & a supercar or a huge house...

The use of this word “inheritance” is used to refer to what we have in Christ AND it is also used in the NT to refer to what GOD has in US through Jesus.

**So this word “inheritance” is more similar to our modern word LEGACY.**

- We are given access to participate in and receive a LEGACY through Christ.
- ALSO, we ARE God's LEGACY in Christ.

Just sit for a second and let that blow your mind: we have VALUE to God...

- God is 100% independent—not needing anything from outside of Himself.

**This 100% good, holy, complete God —IS LOVE.**

- Because He IS love, He loves.
- Because God IS love, He reaches out.
- Because God IS love, He sacrifices.
- Because God IS love, He brings the unlovely to Himself.

**As benefactors of God's love, our inheritance IS GOD!**

John-Alexander McClaren

**What is the portion for a soul? God. No interpretation of 'the inheritance,' however it may run into cheap and vulgar sensuous descriptions of a future glory, has come within sight of the meaning of the word, unless it has grasped this as the central thought: 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.' Only God can be the portion of a human spirit. And none else can fill the narrowest and the smallest of man's needs.” —John-Alexander McClaren**

- God's legacy is LOVE, and we are the object of that love.
- Our legacy is BELOVED, and God is the lover of our souls.

THIS is our inheritance in Jesus!

- We are LOVED.
- We are made right by God's love.
- We are satisfied by God's love.
- We are at peace in God's love.
- We are joyfully expectant in God's love.
- We have purpose and meaning in God's love.

So when Paul says:

**Ephesians 3:6b (NLT)**

**...Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.**

The “promise of the blessing” is being WITH GOD.

**We enjoy God NOW—and— we enjoy the future promise of being with God!**

- Right NOW we enjoy Jesus...

- We enjoy God's salvation because it stands in stark contrast with our sin
- We appreciate God's love because of the UN-LOVLINESS of sinful humanity.
- We find rest and peace in God's love because it rescues us from the striving and exhaustion of the world.
- God is good and God is holy, and right now we are able to enjoy the love of God in Jesus because of what He has done for us.

**We also look FORWARD to future promises of God:**

- We will enjoy God without the steady assault of sin and brokenness and pain of the world.
- We will enjoy God 100% for who HE is—without the constant needs of the world.
- We will have ETERNITY before us to worship Him in His presence.
- We will be pure—not just positionally, but functionally. There WILL BE NO MORE SORROW OR SIN!
- We will enjoy Jesus because He is God—He is the one who steps out in love.

“The riches inherited by God's children” refers to the never-ending blessing of being IN CHRIST, WITH God.

- We are both in Christ NOW, and will be IN CHRIST for all future time.

Living in Christ NOW means I am living in the present promises of God:

- Living in the presence of God.
- Seeking God and His Word for wisdom, direction and purpose..

Living with ANTICIPATION of the future promises of God ALSO affects life right now!

- We think differently
- We dream differently
- We plan differently.

Our position in Christ changes us—it HAS to!

**We live IN CHRIST!**

- We live IN the one who reaches out to save.
- We live IN the one who expresses the love of the Father to the broken and far off.
- We live IN the one who joyfully sacrifices, redeems and restores the lost to the Father.

We LIVE in, PARTICIPATE in, find JOY and PURPOSE in the person, presence and plan of Jesus!

- *Our life RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW is forever changed as we live IN this incredible inheritance—this legacy that God has bestowed upon us in Jesus!*

In Jesus, we give ourselves to growing into a family—God's Kingdom Family...

- We can't lose this sense of responsibility to love each other:
  - to minister to each other
  - care for each other
  - to look—in humility—up to each other and esteem others better than ourselves
  - to have the same love for one another as we have for ourself.

Living as benefactors of God—living IN the inheritance of God—means we pray as Jesus taught us:

**Matthew 6:9-10 (NASB)**

**'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.**

**10 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.**

We seek and ask and walk in the reality that God is in us and we are in Him...

- We walk EXPECTANTLY with Jesus—EXPECTING God to move and act and heal and save.
- We walk POWERFULLY with Jesus—going where He leads, doing what He is doing.
- We walk JOYFULLY with Jesus—enjoying God's love and presence and purposes everywhere we go.

**As a Kingdom Kid living life partaking in God's inheritance, we are key to this Kingdom Family-culture being established here.**

- We—each of us—are invited to participate in the Kingdom Family of God.
  - Wherever there's bitterness, get rid of it.
  - Wherever there's animosity...
  - wherever there's an attitude of prejudice, we turn for it.
  - wherever there's an opportunity to love, let's—in humility—minister to the needs of others

**Let's bind this thing together—this FAMILY— with love.**

- We live IN Jesus—our lives are hidden in Him.
- We live WITH Jesus—we go with, stay with, rest in Jesus.
- We live FOR Jesus—He is our inheritance—our salvation—our hope—our future—our joy.

**God's blessings and promises in Jesus means that we have a wealth in this life and a future inheritance awaiting us in glory.**

- Now, you may feel like you have nothing on this earth, but in Jesus, you are invited to participate in and enjoy the presence and the INHERITANCE of being in God's family!
- You may only see suffering right now—TAKE HEART!!
  - Paul encourages us in Romans 8:

**Romans 8:18 (NASB)**

**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

Christian, Jesus is in you—you are accepted by God because you are IN Jesus.

- What an incredible reality—we are WITH GOD in Jesus.
- What a tremendous mystery—God's love and grace is in ALL who put their faith in Jesus.

**We are so woven INTO Jesus that we—the Church—is called the BODY of Christ.**

**THIS is our reality—Church, Jesus is our reality!**

- We exist IN Him, WITH Him, FOR Him, and we live our lives all ABOUT Him.
- We ENJOY Jesus.
- We CELEBRATE Jesus.
- We CLING TO Jesus.
- We WORSHIP Jesus...