

Mysterious Plan: Unity and Inheritance

Ephesians 1:9-14

Mysterious Plan

Eph 1:9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure.

Mystery is a secret known only to a few. Like Poirot revealing the mystery at the end of the drama, the mystery of what God has been up to is being revealed, all is now ready to let the rest of us in on the drama. (Eph 6:19; Ro 16:25; Col 1:26, 27) All believers are let in on the secret, the plan was a plan of incredible grace, to unite all people (Eph. 2:11–3:13), the plan is love, a total pleasure to God.

Mystery Revealed

The time was right, God is now happy to reveal the plan. Generally the NT refers to the revelation of the mystery rather than keeping it a secret, the gospel or good news is that mystery is revealed not kept from people. However, you have to have spiritual insight to be able to grasp the impact of the revelation (1 Co 2:10), the enemy strategy is to keep the mystery 'veiled' to the unbeliever..

2 Corinthians 4:4

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

FF Bruce says 'the apostle prays that his readers may know by experience things that belong to the mystery of God's will', we are supposed to experience the very heavenly scheme of God in our daily lives.

Family Plan

The word plan is the word 'oikonomia' meaning administration, stewardship, household management, it has the sense is that the plan of God's house is being managed to a definitive end. We may struggle sometimes to understand the plan of God for his household, we may not know exactly what is happening, but be comforted - there is a plan that is in process of being revealed!!

Unity Plan

Eph 1:10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

Here is something about the heart of the mysterious plan of God. When the time was right (ripe) and not before, God brings together everything. All of heaven, all of earth, the plan is not just about the unity of people but the unity of all things, the cosmos joined "in him". We are not just talking about the joining of the church, from a place of division to a glorious joining in the spirit, we are talking about so much more. The fusion of heaven and earth, matter and spirit. No longer will things seem to be separate but rather together. The art of the apostolic mandate is unity, the drawing together of things that are separate, it is the heart of the gospel, the joining up of man to God.

D-Day for Sin!

The plan of unity sees the removal of sin, the penalty of sin has been removed with Christ's first coming, its presence will be removed by his second coming. "Heaven & earth will know a unity of fellowship and purpose where all things are brought under the rule of King Jesus" Wastall & Rossol. The secret plan of Christ's arrival, was D-Day for planet earth. God was in the process of bringing unity, everything wrapped up, everything together. A sin torn earth brings division, the earth left in sin will seek to tear itself apart at every opportunity. However the master plan is unity, the gathering of everything in heaven or under the earth submitted to the authority of Jesus. It is the active demonstration of the rule of the kingdom in our daily lives.

Conflict!

It is why division and dissent is such a big deal to God. There are many scriptures that call us to live unified lives with each other. We are told not to let the day end still being angry with each other (Eph 4:26), to resolve conflict straight away (Mt 5:23-26), not to spread rumors about others (Pr 11:13), in fact don't get in to any sort of bad mouthing behaviour (Eph4:31). Its not that as believers we will avoid anger or judgements about others, rather its how we deal with them that is important. Conflict is an inevitable human condition, but how we respond and deal with conflict is the issue. The plan of God is for harmonious unity, that is the heavenly mandate, we get to start operating it on earth!

Revealed in 'Christ in You'

In Col 1:27, Paul refers to the manifestation of the mystery as being 'christ in you' revealing the hope of glory, or God fully radiating his nature to you and in you. Christ provides a guarantee here and now of the fullness of something that is yet to come. The plan is about us being revealed as children of God, but that is only part of the redemptive purpose, it is essential that the children of God come to an awareness of their inheritance if the full mysterious plan is to be made possible. All creation wants to get its share in the revealing (Rom 8:21), the universe itself is part of the secret purposes of God, but needs us to get revealed.

FF Bruce says 'he planned to gather up the fragmented and alienated universe... all things , then, are to be 'summed up' in Christ and presented as a coherent totality in him'

Kyle Snodgrass : 'Jesus is the focal point that gives all creation coherence..Christians must live like people who know their geography, who know they live in christ and consequently are part of him... knowing we are part of Christ brings ethical transformation'''

I Cor. 15:24–28, Col. 1:20–22

Inheritance Plan

Eph 1:11-12 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. 12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.

'It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for' [mess], the inheritance of the heavenly places is a rich treasure house of blessing (1 Peter 1:3–4). This is all part of the mystery plan. This was the destiny that was in the mind of God before creation, it

was Father God's intension that you should get an inheritance, he wants you to have it, its part of the lavishness of grace! All good Father's want to leave an inheritance for their children, so the church gets to engage in the inheritance that was set aside for the people of God (Rom 8:17; Gal 3:29; Col 1:12)

When Paul was writing Ephesians, Christianity was emerging from just a Jewish sect. There was a deep cultural understanding of the genetic inheritance, Jewish believers knew they were the chosen people. However, Paul is writing to the gentile (non jewish) believers, the plan of inheritance was for all who believed and not just for the historic people of God. Spiritual birth is essential for the inheritance plan to be put into effect.

Spirit Guaranteed Plan

Eph 1:12-13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the (word of) truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

'God is honoured when we....display the family likeness which stamps them as his children' FF Bruce

Word...

It is God by his Spirit that makes us His children. Trusting in God is by faith, it comes from the 'word of the truth' (NKJ) (cf. Jn 17:17, Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18) further described as the 'gospel of salvation'. We have to hear the word of truth for salvation to occur, somehow the mission (gospel *ēuaggēliōn*) is dependent on the word (logos) to get out there.

...and Spirit

But we should not just leave it as a 'word' thing, it needs the Spirit to activate the word, consolidate it, the Holy Spirit brings a validity to the contract of the believer with God, it is the Holy Spirit that makes the reality of sonship true in the person (Ac 19:1–6; Ro 8:16, 23; 1Jn 3:24) Like a physical seal that puts an imprint on us, to assert ownership and validity so it is with the seal of the Holy Spirit. It is a seal that makes a promise of something to come, the fullness of the spirit is a promise of God for us (Joel 2:28; Zech 12:10; Jn 7:38, 39).

Anointed, Sealed, Guaranteed

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

He (God) anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (NIV)

Paul uses three ideas to describe what is going on we are 'anointed' -made and set aside for a special for task and purpose, 'sealed' - the stamp of ownership as part of the family of God, 'guaranteed' - while we wait for the full revelation we have a down payment to secure our place!

This is a rock solid guarantee or downpayment, the Spirit promises something to come, like an engagement ring that promises a wedding, this is a permanent guarantee that locks us in the unity with God until the time when all things are finally joined in unity. The Spirit

is the forerunner of the glorious inheritance of unity, he is "the fulfilled promise of a new age of righteousness" (Uteley)

Purchased for Freedom

We are completely "purchased" or 'until the redemption of the purchased possession'. This redemption is not release from the guilt of sin, that has already happened, it was spoken of in Ephesians 1:7 and the believer is already "God's possession." Instead, this is the believer's ultimate final release from the presence of sin (cf. Rom. 8:23b; Phil. 3:20-21).

We are talking here about the total deliverance of all creation (the body and all visible matter) from the bondage of sins corrupting influence, and from the powerful effects of the usurping prince of this world, into a intense glorious liberty that the children of God experience (Ro 8:21–23; 2Pe 3:13).

Finally, God lives with man, he makes his home with us (Rev 21:3). This grace outpouring puts a permanent marker into our lives, it is the Holy Spirit. No longer is the Spirit just a remote figure, he indwells us, a guarantee of the final redemption of all things.