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# The Mystery and the New Covenant

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 Edited by David Sielaff, March 2011

## The Mystery and the New Covenant

The majority of people believe that the New Testament teaches that all Christians today are under what God calls “The New Covenant.” Nothing could be farther from the truth. If one views Christians today in the manner that God the Father and our Elder Brother Jesus Christ views Christians, no Christian is under either the “Old Covenant” or the “New Covenant.” Now wait a moment. Before anyone begins to call me a heretic, one should look at the plain and simple New Testament teaching called by the apostle Paul “**The Mystery.**” This was the final doctrine revealed by Christ Jesus to Paul and other apostles about the year 63 AD.

That final doctrine represents the finest teaching that God could ever give to mankind but it is a teaching that is almost totally misunderstood by Christians today. In this Doctrinal Report we will show what the basic teaching of “**The Mystery**” actually entails and we will then reveal where the teaching of the New Covenant finally comes into play. The most important thing, however, is to determine how God the Father and Christ Jesus now reckon mature Christians in a legal sense. When we recognize our legal standing in simple terms, we will then discover that mature Christian teaching is easy to understand and makes perfectly good sense in a sensible way.

The apostle Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and Colossians are companion letters and they speak about the same subject with slightly different emphases. That subject is known as

- “**The Mystery**” (Ephesians 3:3) which in plain English means “The Secret.”
- This doctrine is further elaborated as being “**The Mystery of Christ**” (verse 4);
- “**The Mystery of His Will**” (1:9);
- “**The Great Mystery**” (5:32 as it is in Greek); or
- “**The Mystery of God, Christ**” (Colossians 2:2).
- The body of believers known as the *ekklesia* (erroneously translated as “church”) is given “**The Administration of the Mystery**” (which is translated as the “fellowship of the mystery” in the King James Version — Ephesians 3:9).

This “Great Mystery” or “Secret” was made known to Paul and the *ekklesia* about the year 63 AD and from that time onward this doctrine was made known through the *ekklesia* to the whole world and to all the angelic powers throughout the earth and the heavens (Ephesians 3:9,10).

Before 63 AD, the apostle Paul said the Mystery “**had been hid in God**” (Ephesians 3:9). God had kept it a secret from the knowledge of anyone (human or angel) even from before the foundation of the world — long before the creation of Adam. Indeed, Paul said that “**from the beginning of the world** [eons, plural] **it has been hid in God**” (verse 9). Paul spoke of it as

“... the Mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is **NOW** [in 63 AD] **revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.**”

• *Ephesians 3:4–5*

Paul further stated in the Book of Colossians that this doctrinal teaching was called

“**the Mystery which has been hid from** [previous] **ages and from** [previous] **generations, but NOW** [in 63 AD] **made manifest to his saints.**”

• *Colossians 1:26*

This brand new revelation called “**The Mystery, which from the beginning of the world** [eons, plural] **has been hid in God**” (Ephesians 3:9) was first manifested to the world about 63 AD. You will not read of this particular “Mystery teaching” in any of the earlier epistles of Paul except in the subscription of Romans 16:25 which was written after 63 AD as I explain in my book *The Original Bible Restored*. In that subscription, Paul said that this newly revealed teaching was being manifested in “prophetic scriptures” and that it was “**the Mystery, which was kept secret since the world** [eonian times (plural)] **began**” (Romans 16:25–26).

This new teaching was not known by the apostles, the early Christians or the Jews in any period earlier than 63 AD.

- Adam did not know of it.
- Abraham was unaware of it.
- Moses did not hear it.
- Christ did not teach it to the Jews or his disciples while he was on earth.
- The apostles themselves from 30 AD (when the first Jewish *ekklesia* began on Pentecost day after Christ’s resurrection) and up to the year 63 AD (33 years later) did not know of this advanced and final teaching of the Gospel either.

It was only when special revelations were given to Paul and others in the crucial year of 63 AD that this grandest teaching that God could ever give to mankind was revealed. And it was something very different from what had been taught before, even in matters involving Christian belief and the Christian faith.

From 63 AD onward, “**The Mystery**” put Christians into an entirely different legal status to God the Father and our Elder Brother Jesus Christ. It elevated Christians to such a sublime and high position in the divine hierarchy in heaven that the religious rules and statutes that were designed to govern various races of mankind (while they are reckoned as humans in the flesh) were entirely superseded by a new spiritual status which completely eliminated the need for any religious rules or statutes to be observed by Christians. In a word, a brand new legal status was given to those humans who now found themselves as being “**in Christ Jesus.**”

It is time that we realize what this new legal status is all about. By being “**in Christ Jesus**” (in the manner meant in the teaching of “**the Mystery**”), it reckons us as having a divine position of immense rank and importance in the eyes of the Father even though we are still human beings and are still living in the

flesh on this earth. It is the most wonderful and glorious instruction ever given to mankind or to the angelic hosts in earth or in heaven. While the “New Covenant” teaching of the first thirty years of Christianity is excellent and beautiful in its scope, the teaching of **“The Mystery”** causes the first legal status of Christians to be reckoned as a mere glimmer of light compared to the principles of **“The Mystery”** that emblazon forth with the full strength of the meridian sun. It was a giant leap forward in understanding. It takes a Christian from being considered “a glorified human” into a prestigious legal position of being reckoned by the Father as “a glorified God” with the Christian having an equal family status alongside the Father and Christ Jesus. Simply put, to be “in Christ Jesus” in the teaching of **“The Mystery”** carries with it a profound meaning and legal significance in the eyes of the Father. Let us now see just what are the basic tenets of this new teaching called **“The Mystery”** that was kept secret from the knowledge of the world until the apostles revealed it about the year 63 AD?

### ***What Entailed the Teachings of “The Mystery”?***

The first principle of **“The Mystery”** is that Christians now (that is, since 63 AD) are no longer reckoned by the Father as either a Jew or a Gentile. Under the New Covenant legislation there were still various rules of religious conduct that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians were expected to do. Indeed, all Gentile Christians had to become a part of the nation of Israel and were expected to perform the religious duties of Israelites (except physical circumcision and other such exclusive Jewish rituals of the flesh). But with **“The Mystery,”** Christians are no longer acknowledged by the Father as either a Jew or a Gentile. All physical and religious distinctions that made Jews and Gentiles to be separate peoples have been abolished in **“The Mystery”** (Ephesians 2:14–15).

A new status is now in effect for Christians.

**“But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off [Gentiles] are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace [offering], who has made both one ...**

**for to make in himself of twain [of two human races] ONE NEW MAN so making peace; and that he might reconcile both [human races] unto God IN ONE BODY by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”**

• ***Ephesians 2:13–16***

This **“NEW MAN”** is neither Jew nor Gentile. In fact, “A NEW RACE OF PERSONS” has been created. Now, both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians have been melded together into ONE BODY. A new legal status with the Father has emerged.

What are Christians NOW — after 63 AD?

**“Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but [this new race of persons is reckoned as] fellow citizens with the saints and of the household [the very FAMILY] of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom you are built together [as one people] for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”**

• ***Ephesians 2:19–22***

### ***What Is the Prime Teaching of the Mystery?***

The central teaching of **“The Mystery”** is that Christians have Christ in them and that all Christians are also in Christ. Christ is now in us and we are in Him. Look at how Paul worded it in Colossians:

**“God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles [even the Gentiles would know of it]; which is CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory [the hope of achieving a divine glory]: whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present EVERY MAN PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS.”**

• *Colossian 1:27–28*

So, the teaching of “**the Mystery**” is that EVERY MAN [every human being] will finally understand that he or she is in Christ Jesus and that EVERY MAN [every human] is also to have Christ Jesus in himself or herself [Christ Jesus is to be found in all mankind]!

### *How Long Have Christians Been In This Legal Position?*

We now come to an important aspect of the teaching of “**the Mystery**.” When did we first obtain all our spiritual blessings “**in Christ**”? Paul said: “**According as he** [God] **has chosen us in him** [Christ] **before the foundation of the world**” (Ephesians 1:4). Our being “**in Christ**” was made legal in the eyes of the Father even before the physical cosmos which we see around us came into existence. We were then given the legal status of being reckoned as the very children of God Himself. “**Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will**” (Ephesians 1:5).

This divine position of being accounted as God’s own children was accomplished by Christ “**according to the good pleasure of His will**” — not by our own wills. Indeed, we did not even exist at the time. But so certain was this divine status assured to us, that the apostle Paul even deemed that each of us was already saved “**in Christ**” long before Adam was ever created.

**“Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world [eonian times] began.”**

• *2 Timothy 1:9*

We were considered to be in Christ even at that distant time in the past. But it does not end there.

When Christ came into this world and became a human baby we were also reckoned by the Father to have been “**in Christ**” at that time too. How can we know this? Because eight days after Christ’s birth he was circumcised in the Temple at Jerusalem. And what does Paul say of this act as far as our legal relationship to Christ was concerned? “**In whom** [in Christ] **also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ**” (Colossians 2:11). In other words, when Christ was circumcised as a baby of eight days, you and me (male or female makes no difference for this is a religious and legal principle being discussed) were also circumcised in the eyes of the Father at the same time! But it still does not end there.

We continued in a legal sense to be “**in Christ**” for about thirty years — until the time of His baptism by John the Baptist. And then what happened according to Paul? That is when each of us was unitedly “**buried with him in baptism**” (Colossians 2:12). The truth is, Paul was telling the Colossians (and all of us) that when John the Baptist was baptizing Christ for sins, it was not Christ’s sins that were being washed away (because He had none personally). It was our sins that were legally being washed away. Since we were then “**in Christ**,” we were vicariously accounted by the Father as being baptized when John baptized Christ. This means that legally each of you has been baptized in the River Jordan by no less than John the Baptist himself! This is the “**one baptism**” that now counts in your salvation (Ephesians 4:5), not the one (or ones) performed on you by some other humans here on earth. But it doesn’t end there.

When Christ died on the tree of crucifixion, you were still “**in Christ**” at that time too. Paul said even before the teaching of “**the Mystery**” that “**I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me**” (Galatians 2:20). This means that when Christ died by crucifixion, the Father reckons that you died with Him because you were “**in Christ**” at the time. But it doesn’t end there.

When Christ rose from the dead three days later, you also rose up with Him! As Paul taught:

**“If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.”**

• *Colossians 3:1*

That is right! When Christ was risen from the dead, the Father legally reckoned that you also were risen from the dead at the same time. Not only that, since after death all people are destined to be resurrected and go to the judgment (Hebrews 9:27–28), so likewise Christ went through a judgment after His death (as all humans must do), and He passed through triumphantly. And what did the Father do with Christ after He passed His judgment with no sins on His records (only perfect obedience was recorded)? The Father told Christ to come forward and sit on His right hand.

While this was all fine for Christ, what about you and me? What is wonderful is the teaching of “**the Mystery**” that you and I were also “**in Christ**” even at that time. In the eyes of the Father each of us went triumphantly with Christ through the judgment and sat down with Him on the right hand of the Father Himself. That is right, you and I are still “**in Christ**” and we are presently sitting (and I mean in a legal sense right at this very moment) on that very throne in heaven. Paul said:

“[God] **has quickened us together** [made us alive together] **with Christ, (by grace are you saved), and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.**”

• *Ephesians 2:5–6*

We are considered to be in heaven “**where Christ sits at the right hand of God**” (Colossians 3:1). We have passed our judgment with Him and are legally sitting in Him and He in us at the right hand of the Father!

When the Father looks over to His right and sees Christ sitting there beside Him as His own firstborn of all creation, the Father also sees each of us (in a very personal way) legally sitting there with Him. That is what the teaching of “**The Mystery**” is all about. The Father has no second born children. He only has firstborn! Each of us (and soon the whole human race once they are redeemed) will be sitting in that same firstborn position “**in Christ**” in the very family of the living God! That’s why Paul said in the teaching of “**the Mystery**” that each of us makes up “the household of God.” We are a part of the divine family of God that controls and governs the entirety of this universe. Our destiny (even before the creation of Adam) has been to become the very children of God! And each of us will perform that role because of the works of Christ on our behalf. We have been saved “**in Christ**” from before the foundation of the physical cosmos (2 Timothy 1:9). And though the Father kept the understanding of this divine truth a secret from the beginning of the world, He saw fit to give that knowledge to the world in 63 AD through His apostles.

### ***Our Present Obligations***

Our salvation in Christ is assured. It has been certain since we were “**in Christ**” before Adam was created. That is why the apostle Paul said that our salvation is something that is given to us by grace (long before our births) and not by any works of man (whether those works be good or bad). True enough, works were essential in securing our salvation, but they were not our works, they were the works of Christ Jesus while He was in the flesh over 1900 years ago. He is the one who did the perfect works for us as our substitute.

Where so many Christians go wrong today is in their belief that they have to do some works (many are not sure just what works) in order to be saved. Some think they have to work up a measure of “faith” on their own. Nonsense! Any faith you have to work up to believe in Christ is going to be a deficient work because you simply cannot work up enough faith on your own to get you saved. Salvation is truly dependent upon works, but those works happen to be those of Jesus Christ while He was on earth. He lived a life of substitution for us, and God the Father accepts that substitutionary role of Christ in our stead as the means to give us a Perfect righteousness and sinlessness in His sight. Christ did the works that got us saved.

The teaching of “**the Mystery**” is not a teaching about what you have to do for you to get saved. It is a teaching that shows you and the world what Christ Jesus did that got you and the world saved. What preachers need to do today is give the world the Christian teaching of what Jesus Christ did for them to get them saved, not what they supposedly have to do to get saved. True, all people must express a belief and faith in Christ. They must also will in their hearts to repent and live the proper ethical and moral way that

Christ approves for His people. But even here, what people misunderstand is the fact that the apostle Paul said that **“it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”** (Philippians 2:13). Even when we will to do good works, it is something motivated by God from the action of His grace [as a gift] to us. Our own good works have no relevance in securing a salvation for us. Only the works of Christ which He did perfectly for us are the works that God the Father will accept in the matter of our salvation. That is why our salvation is secure, because it is not our works that count in granting us salvation. It is the works of Christ that He did for us in His substitutionary role of living, dying and being resurrected in our stead.

### ***A Warning***

While our salvation is assured, we should always be about our Father’s business and living in a righteous way that contributes to the glory of Christ Jesus. We should always be pleasing Christ and the Father with an upright and proper conduct of life. On the other hand, if we want to live like the world after knowing this wonderful truth of **“the Mystery,”** we can miss out on the Millennial Kingdom phase of salvation (Ephesians 5:5). But, if God and Christ are delighted with our conduct in this life, they will resurrect us in the first resurrection and let us enjoy the Millennial Kingdom phase of salvation (Revelation 20:4–5). Yet, if we continue to live like the rest of the world, we will be brought to salvation all right, but God will let us inherit it with the rest of the world — when the world gets their salvation **“in Christ.”** The world obtains their salvation only after the Kingdom phase of a thousand years reign of Christ is over.

Paul warned all of us who understand the teaching of **“the Mystery”**:

**“For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”**

• ***Ephesian 5:5***

If we do not please God the Father and Christ Jesus in our earthy lives, they may well consider it appropriate not to grant us our salvation until the thousand year “Kingdom phase” is over.

When people read in the New Testament of those who may not make it into their inheritance, it is always speaking about the “Kingdom phase” of salvation, not salvation itself which has been absolutely secured to the human race through the works and efforts of Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother. All men will indeed be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), but Paul said mankind will only be granted a salvation **“in its own seasons”** (1 Timothy 2:6, see original Greek). Salvation is awarded at different times. We should want to do good works now in order to please the Father and Christ. If we do, we can have the assurance that we will be in the first resurrection and enjoy along with Abraham, Moses, David, the apostles and others, the “Kingdom phase” of salvation. Let us remember, though all mankind is guaranteed a salvation through the works of Christ, all do not receive it at the same time (1 Timothy 2:4–6).

We should always be diligent in doing good works. And we should also meet all our human obligations to our families and to our societies that are within the boundaries of moral and ethical principles of fairness that are found within the biblical revelation. Our legal position of presently being on the right hand of the Father is a position only recognized by the Father and Christ Jesus. Mankind does not look on us as having this august standing as the very children of God. So, all legitimate obligations we have with the rest of mankind should be fulfilled by Christians. For example, if we have a contract to pay department store money for a product we received from them, we should pay the store precisely and meet all the obligations of the contract. True, any default will not jeopardize our salvation in Christ, but our wrong attitudes could keep us from experiencing the “Kingdom phase” of salvation and we can inherit many ills during this life by our wrongdoing.

What we should continually do is to be trying to please the Father in our human actions by developing the gifts of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–25). But in spite of what our obligations are to others of the human race in this life, our spiritual obligations to the Father have been fully met in the actions of Christ Jesus on our behalf. When Christ was on earth He kept the Sabbath perfectly, as well as the holyday celebrations, and

all other ceremonial matters that God gave to Israel. He observed them as a substitute for us. We have already kept all these ceremonial laws perfectly **“in Christ”** and they pertain to us no longer. Paul taught:

**“Let no man therefore judge you in meat [food] or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come [of future events].”**

• **Colossians 2:16–17**

We who understand **“The Mystery”** have already kept all those ceremonial duties perfectly in Christ over 1900 years ago and we have satisfied God’s requirements in performing them fully.

In fact, the whole of Christ’s perfect life and all His works have now been attributed to us personally. When we come before the judgment seat of God, the Father will simply look on our debit side and find no sins whatever accounted to us (they were paid for in full by Christ on our behalf) and when God looks at our credit side, He will find all the righteous works of Christ given (by grace) to us. They are now reckoned as our own works (1 Corinthians 1:30).

### ***Where Does the New Covenant Fit In?***

The New Covenant no longer is an agreement that we who understand **“the Mystery”** are part of. The reason for this is simple. Since 63 AD, those of us who have accepted the legal position of **“the Mystery”** are now reckoned by the Father as a **“NEW RACE”** who are neither Jews nor Gentiles. We are now members of the very household of God and reigning, in a legal sense, with Christ Jesus at the right hand of the Father. The New Covenant agreement, however (along with the Old Covenant), was made solely with the human nations of Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:8; 10:16–17). Gentiles were never included in the agreement.

For the first thirty years of Christian teaching, all the inheritance that the apostles knew about was that associated with the New Covenant made with Israel and Judah. This is why Paul considered it necessary to find a method by which the Gentiles could become spiritual Israelites (Romans 11:11–33). God gave Paul a way that Gentiles became “Israelites.” They were spiritually grafted into Israel without being circumcised. Indeed, all that was required of Gentiles is that they repent, accept Christ, be baptized, take the Lord’s Supper and keep the minimal laws made by the apostles at Jerusalem (Acts 15:23–29). And while the New Covenant legislation is still in effect for those who wish to join Israel and inherit only the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (and added to by David), those of us who are part of **“The Mystery”** have a more majestic inheritance.

God has a greater reward in mind for the human race than the New Covenant promises to Israel and Judah. With the advanced teaching of **“The Mystery,”** a Christian is no longer reckoned by God as an Israelite (or even as a Gentile). And while the earlier promise of the New Covenant that Israel would inherit a physical kingdom of God that will last for a Millennium is still quite valid, we have been given something more glorious. Certainly God will keep His agreement with Israel, but we have been granted something far beyond the Kingdom. We now are a part of the very Family of God. We are no longer a part of human “Israel.” We are now a part of the divine God (1 John 3:2).

Since we have “died” to being human “Israelites,” the New Covenant has no relevance to us any longer. We have advanced beyond it. The Lord’s Supper (which is associated with the New Covenant) no longer pertains to us. Indeed, the Lord’s Supper was to show in symbol the death of Christ “until He comes back to earth.” But we are now reckoned as “resurrected” with Christ and we are already legally living in Him in heaven. We are sitting with Him on His glorious throne next to the Father (Ephesians 2:5–6). We are now in the ultimate state of glory. Let us boldly grasp our inheritance that we now base **“IN CHRIST”** and not rely on any lesser covenants, no matter how glorious they were.

Ernest L. Martin, 1992

Edited by David Sielaff, March 2011