

# What the Mystery of Abraham's Promise Means for You Today

Paul concludes his teaching of the one new man in the first six verses of Ephesians 3. He calls it a "mystery," and then "the mystery of Christ," which was uniquely committed to him by God's grace. He even declares that this mystery is something that was not revealed (or at least not in the same way) to the Old Testament prophet but is now being revealed to/by the New Testament apostles and prophets. He concludes: 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 (see Eph. 3:4-6).

Here, the apostle uses three compound words in the Greek to describe the mystery: *synkleroma*, *sysoma*, *synmetoka*—all starting with the prefix "syn," from which we get English words like "synchronize," "synthesize" and "synergy." New Testament Greek scholars tell us that it is hard to capture the clout of these three words in other languages.

First is *synkleroma*—"co-heirs." This legal term suggests not just an equality of shared privilege, as in two business partners or family members sharing profits or an inheritance; not simply "joint heirs" like the two brothers in the story of the Prodigal Son—as in, "we have a common father, I get my portion and you get yours;" but instead it is more like two "blood-brothers" who have utterly bound themselves together, totally dependent on each other for whatever inheritance, hope and success they can expect to receive from their common father. In Messiah, we Jews won't get our ultimate inheritance from the father until the nations get theirs—and vice-versa.

Second is *sysoma*—"co-body" people, "of one body." As in Romans 12:5 or 1 Corinthians 12:27, the Apostle describes the *ecclesia* with an organic, biological term—we are a living

body, and Christ is the head. Now, in the Gospel of Messiah, Jew & Gentile have become one living organism, with the same spiritual blood of Christ joining us together; we have the same heavenly DNA, we are of the same family/household. (John 1:13) Whatever happens to one part of the body affects the whole.

Last is *synmetoka*—"partakers of the same promise" in Christ Jesus. "Promise" is in the singular, not "promises." In keeping with the rest of Paul's writings, we can understand him to be specifically referring to the pre-figured, gospel promise made to Abraham, as taught in Romans 4, 8:17, and Galatians 3:26-29. Romans 4:11-17 brings together these ideas from Ephesians 3:6 and other chapters in this book.

Abraham was made a promise (singular), described in two ways: that he would be the "heir of the world" and that he would be "a father of many nations." The incredible mystery of the gospel is that together in Christ Jesus (the greatest son of Abraham!) Jew and Gentile are co-heirs of the same Abrahamic promise; we are members of the same Messianic family (the body of Messiah) and all of this is based on the very same promise made to our now mutual father/ancestor—Abraham. {eoa}

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