

The Secret of the Kingdom

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[0 : 0 0] for a moment to Mark's Gospel and in chapter 4 and we read there at at verse 11, well we'll read at verse 10 and when he that is Jesus was alone those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables and he said to them to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God but for those outside everything is in parables. Now as we know Jesus frequently taught in parables and we know that often even his disciples didn't understand exactly what it was that he was saying and we find here that Jesus is explaining to the disciples exactly what the parable of the sower meant and it's probably one of the great parables of Jesus and we find his opening up of it is so well known and very precious to us. But so much of the teaching in the Bible remains at one level a kind of a mystery to us and yet at another level it is not. Now this word secret that we have here where Jesus says in verse 11 to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God elsewhere it's translated the mystery and if we can think of that a little tonight we realize that there are two levels in our Christian life. At one level so many things remain a mystery to us and yet when we become Christians our understanding is opened our faith is sharpened so that we lay hold upon these things which were real mysteries to us and we begin to understand them and we believe them and we lay hold upon them and they become integral parts of our lives. I think it's one of the great differences between a Christian and a non-Christian. You can have it happens all the time in church you'll have believers sitting beside unbelievers and they will hear the same message very differently.

For some people as unbelievers they will be concentrating and they will be trying to lay hold upon what is being said but they cannot hold on to it or understand it or grasp it in the same way as a believer can.

And we all know we've all been there we know what it's like because it's one of the great things that happens when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ our eyes are opened our understanding is opened and we see things in a way and in a manner that that that that we never saw before.

Because once we become believers we become subjects of a new kingdom and of course that kingdom is the kingdom of God. Now as we know the kingdom of God although there is only the one kingdom in one respect there's a two-fold aspect to the kingdom. There is what we term the present or the here and now and there is also the not yet what is yet to be. We are living just now in the here and now our knowledge and our understanding although it is so different to what it was before we became Christians. Once we enter into the kingdom there is so much of the mystery although it remains a mystery that mystery is opening up to us and we begin to understand things. But when we leave this world and we enter into the kingdom above which of course is all part of the kingdom our understanding will be opened all the more and we will begin to see things and lay hold upon things that we couldn't understand or grasp here at all. Now as we know Jesus is the king of that kingdom the kingdom here on earth and he is also the king of the kingdom in heaven because it's a one kingdom and as Jesus said all power is given to me in heaven and on earth and Jesus governs kingdom here on earth and the kingdom in heaven and in fact Jesus governs the death itself. Jesus governs all aspects of it. We read in Revelation of how he has the keys of death and of Hades of the grave and what is translated there as hell. So there'll come a time of course when Jesus delivers the kingdom to the father. But having said that we know that there are secrets secrets of some sort or another there are things that are maybe private in your lives things that your family there might be something in your family that it's kept within the family nobody outside knows about it but you know and maybe maybe there came a point in your life when you were growing up it was something you didn't know anything about and there might have come a day when your father or mother said you know we're going to have to tell you this. It might have been something that shocked you it might have been a very simple thing but it was something that they didn't share with the outside world. So we enter into these kind of secrets and things that maybe nobody else knows about maybe nobody else knows about and that's what happens when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because we enter into things that those outside just cannot lay hold of or see or understand in any way at all. And I think we remember when we came to faith that's one of the things I remember when I came to faith. I've said it before I grew up with a very good Bible knowledge and I have to give great credit to my mum and dad who taught me well and we had we always had family worship every Sunday night we had a quiz after our evening supper and of course that sent you to try and study the Bible and so that you would have a better idea about about this and that. And so growing up I had a good Bible knowledge but more than just a Bible knowledge of the facts of the Bible I had a good Bible knowledge of what I would term the way of salvation. And I believed everything that the Bible said but it remained a complete mystery to me and this will be true for every person who comes to faith.

[7 : 36] When you come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ it all seems so simple. And you're saying to yourself how could I not have seen that before? Why did I not understand that? For the very simple reason that we were still outside the kingdom and those outside unless God's spirit works in their heart they cannot see, they cannot understand, they cannot believe. So we'll just think of a few of the sort of the what we might term mysteries that we lay hold upon. And of course the great, the obvious one, is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world.

It tells us great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, which is of course the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you and I cannot understand the full working of what happened there.

God has been told. We're told with regard to the conception that it's put beautifully how the spirit would overshadow Mary. And so that this is a mystery to us.

His birth, it's extraordinary that the second person of the Godhead has been born, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him and yet he's, as has been said, shut up in the confines of the womb.

It's extraordinary. He was born into this world in a low condition. We're told that which was part of his humiliation. Born in an outhouse in Bethlehem and that where he was kind of like being rejected at the time of his birth so that there was no room for him was the way it was right throughout his journey through this world.

[9 : 25] We look at his temptation. We look at his arrest, his trial, his crucifixion, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension.

all these things have an element of mystery in them and yet all of them are so precious to us and all of them we believe and it's as if we understood every aspect of it because it is so clear to us and it is so meaningful and so powerful in our experience.

It's funny that some of those who are without, they make fun of these things. They attack them and I think it's one of the things when you become a Christian, it really hurts you when you see people making fun of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, it's so blasphemous but you say to yourself, how on earth do they do? Why are they doing that? But you see, they don't see Jesus as anybody other than a person.

So many, that's how many people are just as an ordinary human being. They do not see him as the son of God but for us, he is precious. We believe all these things. And again, part of the mystery is in all that has happened in order that we might be saved because we know, and again, this is something that we, if we grew up in church, we heard it over and over and over again that to be saved, Jesus Christ takes or has taken our sin upon himself and that his perfect righteousness is placed to our account so that our sins are placed to his account and his righteousness placed to our account.

[11 : 18] We heard that over and over again but you know, all of a sudden there came a point when our mind was opened up to see this and to understand this in a way that we never saw before and it made so much sense to us that we were able to trust our lives out everything upon the Saviour who did that.

And that is why today we're fully persuaded that as God looks on us, he looks at us through Jesus and he sees us as righteous as Jesus with regard to the law.

That is how we are justified because the righteousness of Christ has been put to our account. and then again there is the great mystery of the third person of the Godhead coming to dwell within us.

Now that is quite an extraordinary thought because as the Father is and as the Son is so is the Spirit and yet the Spirit has taken up as it were this hidden work and his great work is to reveal and to make known to us the things of Christ.

And so taking place in our lives every day and every night there is the ministry of the Spirit the third person of the Godhead ministering to our spirit where we're being assured and persuaded where we're being taught and instructed and the word that we so often saw before and read before has a whole new meaning and that is why we should always be saying every day we come to the word as Christians Lord open mine eyes as the psalmist said that I might behold wonderful things out of your law and the Lord is the greatest teacher that there is and the Holy Spirit will teach us if we go to the Lord and say Lord every day and every night please as I come to your word make it even may I see new things in it and I'm sure that as you go on in life sometimes you'll come to a verse that you knew perfectly well you might have heard being preached on loads of times and you're sitting there and as you're looking at it all of a sudden you get a new insight a new angle on it and you say you know this

[13 : 50] I never saw that before what's happened the Holy Spirit has opened your mind and has taught you and has led you in this way that's part of the exciting nature but this is all part of the secrets being revealed to us the mysteries being opened up and again we learn as we go along how different the Christian faith is to the way of the world the way of the world teaches us that we are to develop self-confidence that our life is ultimately about self-interest and that what we do is in order very often that our egos will be polished but when we become Christians it's the very opposite where self-interest is no longer what we're seeking to promote we're no longer wanting to be self-confident but God-confident and these things are difficult it doesn't happen overnight it doesn't happen in a week or a month it's an ongoing lifetime experience but like the Apostle

Paul we will so often say that those things which counted so much in our lives they now mean very little it doesn't mean that everything that we've done in life or anything that we've achieved or whatever all these have their own places and they may have brought great happiness along the way and we just don't we don't dismiss them and say ach but in relation to what we have become and where our main focus is these things don't they don't have the count they don't count the way they used to and that's what the Apostle was saying about all the attainments and he had loads of attainments and he said I count them as but nothing they were like refuse in order that I may win Christ that I may be like him and he gloried remember Paul said that he boasted in nothing except the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ this was this was what everything was to the Apostle and so it should be for us as well and of course there are the endless mysteries of providence and that is a mystery and neither you nor I are able to explain the mysteries of God's providence but what we do know which God has opened our understanding to is that whatever happens in our life however painful or however difficult it may be that God is ultimately working for our good that God does all things well and that God is working for his own glory and although it might be very difficult for us to submit to the way that God's providence has worked faith lays hold upon these things and so there's a growing acceptance in our heart and in our lives that God is actually working everything for our own good even although at the time it may appear anything but so we need we often need and in fact we always need

God's grace to submit to his will and then of course there's all the great mysteries regarding death and beyond about heaven and hell what happens immediately after and I mean there are things we can't quite understand I remember that in the last year of his life my father was always he was praying to be sitting there and he says you know this he says I can't work out how we are going to how we are going to as it were live and it's not live isn't the word how we are going to function in glory without our body because in this world we are so physical everything we do we are doing with our hands and our legs and our eyes and ears and mouths and what not our body is going to be in the grave but our soul which will be as sharp and probably sharper than ever it was in this world is going to be so alive but he used to say

I just can't quite understand he said I can picture what will happen in the resurrection but this in between God has hidden certain things from us and he does so wisely but he has told us that when we die we our souls will go to glory with him today you will be with me in paradise that's what Jesus said to the thief on the cross but in a wonderful way our bodies are still united to Christ in the grave because the salvation that Jesus Christ won for us was a salvation that affected not just our soul but our body as well and although the effect of sin is death and we will be under its power in the grave yet there is a mysterious union to Christ so that come the resurrection our bodies will rise glorious fitted exactly for the new environment in which we're going and so we know these things and we believe them and we lay hold upon them they inspire us they encourage us in a world where so many people are filled with despair there's many people tonight and they're looking out into the future and they say there's nothing ahead we can look into the future and be persuaded of what is ahead and we give thanks and the thing the beauty is that we don't stumble at these things in fact they spur us on whereas for the unbeliever all these thoughts when they do have them causes all kinds of perplexity so with these kind of few thoughts

I think we can see how God has made known to us or opened up to a certain extent some of the mystery and some of the secrets of the kingdom may we thank the Lord for these things Lord bless us we pray we give thanks Lord for what you have shown us and what we believe throughout an endless glory we will come to discover more and more we believe that throughout the endless ages of eternity because you are inexhaustible in your being that we will come to an ever greater knowledge of the glory of God we pray then that you will bless us now and that you will bless us in our homes and in our families that you'll grant us rest and sleep tonight and that we will know your peace in Jesus name we ask all Amen Amen Amen Amen

[21 : 15] Amen Amen Amen