

Series: Ephesians
Title: God's Grand Purpose
Text: Ephesians 1: 10
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For every believer here who has been born of the Holy Spirit, God has “made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” (v9)

Title: God's Grand Purpose

Ephesians 1: 10: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

Proposition: From before the foundation of the world, the grand purpose of God which he purposed in himself is—That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

Divisions: We will simply divide each word in verse ten. Much of what I will say will be a repetition of things we saw in our overview of Ephesians. But as Paul said, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” (Php 3: 1)

I. DISPENSATION—v10: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times...

Dispensation means “stewardship, administration, management.” As when one is given the stewardship over another's household and property.

Illustration: Robert K. over my house

God gave to his Son, Christ Jesus, the stewardship—the management—of his whole house—of those he chose in Christ Jesus. Christ said,

John 17:2: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

And Christ Jesus was faithful to God when he walked this earth and so was deserving of great glory:

Hebrews 3: 1: Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2: Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house. 3: For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. 4: For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God. 5: And Moses verily *was faithful* in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; 6: But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Christ Jesus was faithful and deserving of the great glory God gave him at his ascension because he finished the work the Father gave him to do in the earth:

- **Christ finished the transgressions of his people** so that God never again sees transgressions in us
- **Christ made an end of sins for his people** so that God never again remembers our sins

- **Christ made reconciliation for iniquity of his people:** expiating our sin, making atonement for our sin; satisfying the law and justice of God for us by his sufferings and death; Christ made full reparation to God for all our iniquity toward God.
- **Christ brought in everlasting righteousness for his people**—by Christ’s obedience throughout his life, even in his sufferings and death—the one and only righteousness of the believer, our acceptance, our life, is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by Christ making us the righteousness of God.
- **Christ sealed up the vision and prophecy:** he fulfilled all that was written of him by the prophets; he is the sum and substance of all the visions and prophecies of the Old Testament and Christ is the last and great Prophet.
- **Christ is anointed the most Holy:** anointed with the Holy Ghost as man, at his incarnation, baptism, and ascension to heaven.

The Father now has raised Christ from the dead and given to Christ, as the GodMan, all power over all things. The stewardship, the government, of his household and property, even the universe in his hand.

Ephesians 1: 20: Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, 21: Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

This is the good pleasure which he purposed in himself in Christ Jesus.

Romans 14:9: For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

II. THE FULNESS OF TIMES—v10: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times—It is this whole gospel age.

There were times set and times spoken of in the Old Testament which the Spirit of Christ told the prophets to write about. For instance Daniel said, “Seventy weeks are determined.” Another instance is found in Psalm 102:13: “Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.” So “the fullness of times” is “the time which God set for Christ to come and fill full all those times spoken of.”—“the fullness of times” is the time set for Christ to fulfill the times.

Illustration: Time is divided into BC or AD.

God the Father sent Christ into the earth when the fullness of the time was come.

Galatians 4: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5: To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

This is why Christ came preaching, “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1: 15)

“The fullness of times” will be complete or full when Christ calls all his elect in one body, completing the fullness of his body. In the book of Revelation we find this declared.

Note: Revelation is not a book of revelations. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Each vision Christ gave to John is a description of this gospel age, from Christ's first appearance until the second coming of Christ-- "the fullness of times."

Revelation 1 1: The REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass;... 3: Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.

Revelation 10: 1: And I saw another MIGHTY ANGEL COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

This is Christ right now as the Steward of the Fullness of Times. He is clothed with a cloud and his feet are like pillars of fire because though Christ is in heaven in a body, his presence is with us in Spirit. The cloud and fire over all his assemblies is that glory which shall be for a defense. (Is 4: 5) A rainbow was upon his head because Christ upholds all things by the word of his power, by the everlasting covenant of grace. Seven colors in the rainbow signify perfection. It is an empty bow pointed upward because the arrow of justice has been shot and put away in Christ who is seated up at the right hand of God for us. (Gen. 9:15-16; Isa. 54:7-10). His face is as the sun because the GodMan Mediator risen in glory to lighten his children with divine revelation of this mystery of God's will.

Revelation 10: 2: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

The little book is the good pleasure which God purposed in Christ. Christ shall fulfill everything written. The book shall remain open until he finishes gathering all his children together in one. He has one foot on the sea and one on the earth because all things are put under his feet. His gospel shall be preached to his people wherever they are in the world. As God the Son, he always had dominion. Now the MAN, Christ Jesus, as the reward of his obedience as our Mediator, has been given all dominion over all things.

Revelation 10: 3: And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

As was said in Isaiah 31:4: For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. And as it is said in Joel 3:16: The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Revelation 10: 4: And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. 5: And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth LIFTED UP HIS HAND TO HEAVEN, 6: And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be TIME NO LONGER: 7: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, THE MYSTERY OF GOD SHOULD BE FINISHED, AS HE HATH DECLARED TO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS.

In other words, Christ told John, "Don't write what you heard. I lift my hand and swear by myself because I can swear by no greater, that though the fullness of times are not yet fulfilled, when the last judgment is spoken then the mystery of God shall be finished." Christ says rest assured, he shall uphold all things by the

word of his power until the purpose of God is complete, until all his elect are called into one body. And when the fullness of his body is complete then shall the fullness of times be complete.

Then Christ shows us how he will gather in his people. He gave John a stewardship. In the next four verses John is told to take the book and eat it, like Ezekiel was told. Then Christ gave John his commission in

Revelation 10:11, And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Illustration: I have spent all week eating the book. Now I am preaching to you the mystery of God's grand purpose.

Paul is writing our text. Christ our Head—who has the Stewardship over the fullness of times—gave Paul a stewardship to preach the gospel of the mystery of God's will, too.

Ephesians 3:1: For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the DISPENSATION of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6: That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8: Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9: And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11: According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in [himself] Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”

Application: So you see dispensation means “stewardship”—Christ has the sovereign rule of the whole universe—and head over all things to the church, his body. The “fullness of times” is this whole gospel day of grace—wherein Christ is filling full all the purpose of God—filling his children with the truth, and filling his body. Brethren, the God-man who loved us and gave himself for us, now rules the universe for us! (Dan. 3:25). Christ is the Power which those with a mere form of godliness deny. He is ruling all things in the universe and in the earth, especially in his church, in each assembly, as real as when he walked this earth in person. There is no such thing as luck or chance or blind fate! Satan is not ruling. Sinful men are not ruling. Christ is not frustrated and wanting to do anything—he is fulfilling all things. Our Savior rules all things, with absolute power—that which is well with the righteous and that which is woe to the wicked is all in his power and we are under the power of Christ our Head.

III. THERE SHALL BE A GREAT GATHERING TOGETHER—V10: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

“Gather together in one” is one word in the Greek—it means “to reunite” and it means “sum up under one Head.” There is a gathering into one body here below and that body is in Christ.

Everything God created in the beginning was one—there is no division in God. So everything God created in the beginning was one. The angels he created were all one with God and man was one with God and with

the angels. All things in heaven and earth were one. Can you imagine that! But sin separated all things. Think of how much division and separation sin has caused.

In heaven, sin separated angels from God and from one another—of the devil we read—Ezekiel 28:15: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” Peter said that God cast out the angels that sinned.

In the earth, sin separated Man from God in the garden—“your sins have separated you from your God.”

- Sin at Babel is why God divided our languages and continents
- Sin made Israel hate the Gentile nations
- Sin further separated those in Israel
- Sin further separated all nations and families of the earth: pride of face, race and place.

Sin only divides. Sin has separated us from God and from one another. There is no end to the separation caused by our sin. But Christ shall receive greater glory for “gathering together all things in one body under him in one Head.

This is amazing to me. The invisible God purposed in himself that he would create a visible kingdom where God will dwell in his people and his people will dwell in God. How would God bring about what he purposed in himself? Christ said, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” (Jn 17: 23)

First, God created a world and a people of flesh and blood. He allowed sin to enter and separate all. Then through his people, he sent God the Son, who IN ONE BODY—uniting in ONE his divine nature with our human nature.

Then this One lived and died for his people so we would be made perfect in One—so that One would be our righteousness—“by the obedience of ONE shall many be made righteous.” All our sins were gathered up, all summed up, and made to meet on ONE—on One cross at One time. By which God made us perfect in One by his blood—by blood redemption.

Then God raised Christ back into heaven in One body, as both God and Man, making Christ Head over his body—giving him all power to gather us together in one body. By God the Spirit entering into us, he makes us partakers of the divine nature—he dwells in us and we dwell in him—“ye are no more in the flesh but in the Spirit if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you.” And we each dwell together in his One body—the fullness of him.

Zephaniah 3:9: For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with ONE CONSENT.

Ephesians 2: 13: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14: For he is our peace, who hath made BOTH ONE, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, *so* making peace; 16: And that he might reconcile both unto God in ONE BODY BY THE CROSS, having slain the enmity thereby:

17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by ONE Spirit unto the Father.

19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of THE [ONE] household of God;

Colossians 3: 11: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but CHRIST *is* ALL, and IN ALL.

And in the end, Christ will return for us, and will gather us all together and raise us, with a new body, like unto his glorified body.

Matthew 24:31: And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall GATHER TOGETHER his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

1 Cor 15: 24: Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25: For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26: The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet.—then God shall be all in all.

Then and there, the invisible triune God will have brought to pass the purpose which he purposed in himself. All these children he loved even as he loves his own Son—you and I brethren—shall see the triune God, face-to-face in the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Then God and his children shall dwell together in a new heavens and a new earth in a visible kingdom.

And he says “All things”—both which are in heaven and which are on earth—THAT INCLUDES THE ANGELS.

Illustration: The funnel

1 Timothy 6: 14:...[says God, at] the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15:...IN HIS TIMES he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16: Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

That is God’s Grand Purpose—“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:” (Eph 1:10)

Amen!