

AN OVERVIEW OF GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Today, we will cover some basic truths about God's plan, which the scriptures call 'the eternal purpose' :

Eph 3:8-12 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 Christ Jesus our Lord:
(that is God's Wise Master-Plan that we will be studying today)

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

As we read the scriptures, notice that God has 2 places where He operates:

Gen 14:22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the **most high God**, the possessor of heaven and earth,

When God is described as the 'most high God' that name has special meaning.

The meaning is that God, as the 'most high God' is the supreme controller (or ruler) of the 2 locations mentioned: both heaven and earth.

Those are the 2 places that the very first verse of the Bible tells us God created:

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

God lives in heaven, and He created people to live on earth:

Psa 115:16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S:
but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

That verse also teaches us that there is 'more than 1 heaven' --- but we'll study that some other time.

For now, the thing to realize is God's 2 spheres and WHO inhabits them.

Next, we want to see that problems came up in both places.

First, in heaven an angel named Lucifer decided that HE wanted the control that belonged to God:

Isa 14:12-14 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart,

- I will ascend into heaven,
- I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:
- I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 • I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

- I will be like the most High.

Lucifer wanted to be the possessor of heaven and earth.

After God cast him out of heaven

he came down here to earth to work his evil plan to usurp God's authority here.

God had created human beings to rule over the earth:

Gen 1:26-28 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:
and **let them have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air,
and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth
upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him;
male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them,

- Be fruitful,
- and multiply,
- and replenish the earth,
- and **subdue** it:
- and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air,
and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

God purposed for mankind to control the earth. But Lucifer, now called Satan (in his 'fallen' condition) deceived the woman, who influenced the man, to disobey God's word to SIN.

Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;
and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Satan had achieved his initial plan of evil ---
which was to oppose God's supreme command --- in both heaven and earth.

Job 15:15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints;
yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.

So Satan disrupted heaven and Satan disrupted earth:

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

2 Cor 4:3-4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Turn to Ezek. chapter 28, where God is using the Prince and the King of Tyrus to describe the devil.

This chapter has information about Satan's rebellion and his doomed fate.

Verse 12 - says he was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Verse 13 - says he was in Eden, the garden of God.

Ezek 28:14-15 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created,
till iniquity was found in thee.

Satan's heart was lifted up with pride. He thought he knew everything:

Ezek 28:3 Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel;
there is no secret that they can hide from thee:

Satan thought he was so SMART that nothing could prevent his evil plan of 'take-over.'

But God would OUT-smart Satan!

1 Cor 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written,
He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. *(That is a quote from Job 5:13.)*

God kept a SECRET which would 'UN-DO' Satan's reign:

1 Cor 2:6-8 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect:
yet not the wisdom of this world,

nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even **the hidden wisdom**,
which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 **Which none of the princes of this world knew:**

for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

What God accomplished by the death of Christ on the cross was not revealed until God gave the 'revelation of the mystery' ... that was His 'hidden wisdom' ... to Paul.

Col 2:14-15 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,
which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, (*that's the angels that rebelled*)
he made a shew of them openly, (*when God revealed His 'hidden wisdom'*
through Paul's message)

triumphing over them in it. (*God won the victory over Satan's plan by the work of Christ on the cross.*)

God will -- at some time in the future -- bring everything BACK under HIS supreme control:

Col 1:16-20 For by him were **all things** created,
that are in **heaven**, and that are in **earth**,

visible (*those are the 'things' that are in Earth*)

and **invisible**, (*those are the 'things' that are in Heaven*)

(*Now, just what 'things' is God talking about? What are the 'all things'?*)

whether they be

- thrones,
- or dominions,
- or principalities,
- or powers: (*Those are 'things' of GOVERNMENTAL RULE.*)

all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before **all things**, and by him **all things** consist.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church:

who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead;

that in all things he might have the preeminence.

19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross,

by him to reconcile all things unto himself;

by him, I say, whether they be **things in earth, or things in heaven.**

God told us his 'eternal purpose' the conclusion of it all in Paul's message.

Remember reading Eph. 3:8-12 when we began? Here is a similar passage:

Eph 1:9-10 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

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:

God has also revealed the Devil's end in His word not that Satan will cease to exist but rather, what will become of him when God is finished with him:

2 Thess 2:8-10 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Isa 14:15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Rev 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

God's plan to reclaim the Earth for His glory is the subject of **PROPHECY**.

God will do that through the agency of the nation Israel.

God's plan to restore the Heavens for His glory is revealed in the **MYSTERY**.

God will do that through the church, the Body of Christ.

That is a very BASIC distinction in the Word of God.

If we fail to 'rightly divide' the Word of Truth then we will be CONFUSED by trying to follow God's instructions that He gave to ISRAEL under the LAW instead of obeying the commands God gave to US today under GRACE.

God made Paul a UNIQUE apostle. He was the person whose 'mystery message' actually completed the entire canon of the Bible:

Col 1:25-28 Whereof I am made a minister,
according to **the dispensation of God which is given to me** for you,
to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery

which **hath been hid** from ages and from generations,
but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach,

- warning every man,
 - and teaching every man in all wisdom;
- that we may • present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

This is my desire, as well. To help you intelligently understand your Bible.

Now, let's review these basic truths as we 'rightly divide' the word of truth:

• God has 2 realms for His authority ---- Heaven and Earth:

Heaven (although it is invisible to our eyes) is God's abode.
Earth (which IS visible to us) is where we people live.

• Satan had a plan of evil ---- to usurp God's authority in both places:

Satan caused mutiny in Heaven by leading 1/3 of the angelic population in rebellion (Rev. 12:4).

Satan plunged the human race on Earth under the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).

• God has a plan to restore His authority --- by His wisdom ---- in both places:

The restoration of the Earth is the subject of Prophecy.
God will do that through the agency of the nation Israel.

The restoration of the Heavens is revealed in the Mystery.
God will do that through the church, the Body of Christ.

Next, let's examine how things used to be in 'Times Past' and how they got that way.

Eph 2:11-12 Wherefore remember,
that ye being **in time past**

- Gentiles in the flesh,
- who are called Uncircumcision

by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That **at that time**

- ye were
- without Christ,
 - being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,
 - and strangers from the covenants of promise,
 - having no hope,
 - and without God in the world:

We were in an awful mess. Let's see how we got into such bad shape:

Rom 1:18-25 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them;
for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the **invisible things of him** from the creation of the world **are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead**;

so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God,
they glorified him not as God,
neither were thankful;

but became vain in their imaginations,
and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore **God** also **gave them up** to uncleanness
through the lusts of their own hearts,
to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

The next verse (Rom. 1:26), after the verse we just read also says “God gave them up.”

Rom. 1:28 says “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”

At a point in history, specifically at the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11, God 'gave up on the nations' and scattered them over all the earth by creating different languages so they could not understand each other's speech.

Paul explained what God did in:

Acts 14:16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

That's how the Gentiles (that means 'nations') came to be in darkness. They had refused God's light.

Then God called a man named Abram, out of a idol-worshipping Babylonian city, and gave some very special promises to him:

Gen 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,

unto a land that I will shew thee: *(That's called the Promised Land ... because God promised to give it to Abraham and his family.)*

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, *(Abraham's family became known as Israel.)* and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:

and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. *(The entire human race would benefit through Abraham. In Matt. 1:1, Jesus is called the 'son of Abraham.')*

God separated Abraham's family (also known as Hebrews, or Jews) unto Himself:

Deut 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God:
the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself,
above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

Deut 4:7 For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them,
as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

At that time, in Times Past, we Gentile nations were 'far off' from God. God was with Israel, not us. In fact, God planned to actually live on Earth with them in Jerusalem:

Ps 132:13-14 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.
14 This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

Zech 8:3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

God purposed to establish His Kingdom on Earth, and rule it by His people Israel:

Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Ex 19:5-6 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:
6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

God would set up His everlasting Kingdom on Earth through David:

2 Sam 7:16-17 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Jesus Christ is also called the son of David:

Matt 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ,
• the son of David, • the son of Abraham.

The Kingdom will be like “Heaven on Earth”:

Deut 11:21 That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them,
as the days of heaven upon the earth.

That’s just what Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for:

Matt 6:9-10 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

10 **Thy kingdom come.** Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

In the ‘dispensation of the fullness of times’ that Kingdom WILL come to earth:

Rev 21:2-3 And I John saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven**, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them**, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Israel was supposed to stand and shine the light of God to the rest of the world (the Gentile nations) that were in darkness:

Isa 60:1-3 Arise, shine; for thy light is come,
and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. *(Israel)*
2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:
but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.
3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

But instead of 'rising' to their Kingdom glory Israel crucified their Christ and FELL in unbelief:

Rom 11:11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid:
but rather through their FALL salvation is come unto the Gentiles,
for to provoke them to jealousy.

For now, Israel --- as a nation --- cannot see God's light:

Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

For now, Israel has lost their 'FAVORED NATION' status with God:

Rom 11:32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

For now, Israel's Kingdom has been put 'on HOLD' until a future time:

Acts 3:19-21 Repent ye therefore, and be converted,
that your sins may be blotted out,
when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;
20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:
21 Whom the heaven must receive
until the times of restitution of all things,
which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

The subject of Prophecy is how God will reconcile the Earth to Himself through Israel.

The Mystery shows that God will restore the Heavens with the Church.

The revelation that God committed to the apostle Paul teaches the Mystery.

Let's read through 4 important passages where Paul talks about the mystery given to him personally.

Eph 3:1-7 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.

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to MY gospel, and the **preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,**
 26 **But now is made manifest,** and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Paul requested prayer that he would be BOLD in proclaiming the mystery.

Eph 6:18-20 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, **that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,**
 20 **For which I am an ambassador in bonds:**
 that **therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

Col 4:3-4 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, **to speak the mystery of Christ,** for which I am also in bonds:
 4 **That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.**

May we follow his example,

as we tell others about God's wonderful plan of salvation

and His eternal purpose in Christ!

In closing

Israel's blessings from God were generally earthly and physical.

Our blessings are heavenly and spiritual.

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Eph 2:5-7 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

1 Cor 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

2 Tim 4:18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We're going UP to Heaven to be with the Lord there:

1 Thess 4:16-18 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.