

THE FULNESS OF TIMES

Eph. 1:10

Eph 1:3-10 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 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:**

This morning, we'll look at the Overall Purpose of God

for the culmination of everything.

But before we see how it all ENDS --- let's begin at the beginning.

There we find our very first indication of God's 'long-range' intentions:

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

God's interest is in two places.

God's title, as the Most High God, puts Him as the Supreme Owner of both locations:

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**,

But a wise and beautiful angel, Lucifer, had a different idea. He wanted God's position for himself. In his pride, he devised a plan of evil to overthrow God's authority.

Lucifer made his brag, but he lost his station with God:

Isa 14:12-15 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.

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

In Rev 12:3,4, we learn that Satan persuaded 1/3 of God's angels to follow him in his rebellion. He is exercising his illegal command in the heavens:

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

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:

.... and the Devil is also influencing and dominating the earth:

Job 41:34 He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.

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.

In Heb 2:14, we read that the devil had the power of death.

In Rom 5:12, we see that everyone in the world is under the curse of death.

Rather than simply 'taking Satan out' by God's awesome power

God instead chose to allow the Devil to 'hang himself' --- so to speak:

Job 5:12,13 He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.

13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

The devil really thought he knew everything. He boasted of his wisdom:

Ezek 28:2-5 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:

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

4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:

5 By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches:

Satan thought he was so smart but God set a trap. God put the Prophecy out there of His plan to reconcile the earth for His glory by setting up His earthly kingdom and ruling Planet Earth through Christ and the nation Israel:

Luke 1:30-33 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Luke 1:68-70 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people (**that's Israel**),

69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

70 **As he spake** by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been **since the world began**:

God kept a secret and Satan played right into His hands:

1 Cor 2:7,8 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.

Ha! Ha! The very thing that the devil thought would gain his victory is what God used to seal his fate!

What God accomplished by the 'cross work' of Christ

is what He kept secret --- until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul ---

and that information is what publically embarrassed the devil:

Col 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers (that's the demonic angels), he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (that is, by the cross --- from Col 2:14)

Paul is THE apostle of the Gentiles (Rom 11:13). Listen to Paul's God-given authority:

Eph 3:1-11 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 (Paul) 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 Christ Jesus our Lord:

It is the MYSTERY information

- that God committed to Paul --- to flow through him --- to us

and to be proclaimed through us --- to even the angels.

It is the MYSTERY information that displays God's plan for the heavenly places.

It is the MYSTERY information that completes God's revelation to man.

Col 1:25,26 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me (Paul) 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:

The Prophetic program of God --- has been made known since the world began. It concerned the nation Israel, ruling as kings and priests on the earth.

But the Mystery plan of God --- was NOT made known until God gave it to Paul. It was about the Body of Christ (where Jew and Gentile are NO different), being caught up in the air, to be with the Lord there in heaven forevermore.

We'll consider a few contrasts between the Earthly and Heavenly programs then we'll finish with the consummation of both.

First, we'll look at **The Principal RULING Factor for the Earth Is The LAW.**

Under God's program for Israel on the Earth - the main method of authority is the LAW.

Under BOTH the Old and the New Testaments, Israel had to obey God's LAW.

Here's the OLD one given by Moses which operated on the 'If....Then' precept:

Deut 6:25 And it shall be our righteousness, **IF** we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

Exo 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.

They promised they would obey God:

Exo 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

But as we know, Israel toggled between repentance and idolatry.

Here's the NEW testament also given to Israel also about the LAW:

Jer 31:31-33 Behold, the days come (that will be in the 'Ages to Come'), saith the LORD, that **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel**, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake (that was the OLD one), although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The first covenant was written on tables of stone

but the new one will be in their hearts --- and they will be able to obey God then:

Ezek 36:25-28 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and **cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.**

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. (That's when they get their Promised Land.)

BY CONTRAST

We don't need the law once we are in Christ:

Gal 3:24,25 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Rom 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

The Principal RULING Factor for the Body of Christ (that's US) Is GRACE.

Rom 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

2nd, let's compare

The DESTINY for the Earthly Kingdom People is Coming DOWN.

Turn to Matt 6, where Jesus gave the 'so-called' Lord's Prayer

and hold your place there 'cause we'll come back to it a few times.

Jesus taught His 12 disciples to pray for God's Kingdom to come --- to earth:

Matt 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

.... And one day, their long-awaited kingdom will **REALLY** 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.

Psa 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.

BY CONTRAST

The DESTINY for the Heavenly Kingdom People is Going UP.

Paul wrote Timothy that he was going there:

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.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian saints

1 Thess 4:16,17 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.

That event is commonly known as the 'rapture' (although that word is not in the Bible).

'Rapture' means a 'quick transporting in ecstasy' and 'a catching away in pure delight.'

The concept is part of Paul's MYSTERY revelation:

1 Cor 15:51-53 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Back in the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6 for the 3rd comparison:

We'll see that **God will PROVIDE for His People in their earthly program.**

Matt 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

They can ask for it and forget about it no worries:

Matt 6:25,26 31-33 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Mt 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and **all these things shall be added unto you.**

BY CONTRAST

In the dispensation of GRACE we better WORK if we want to EAT.

Paul taught the Thessalonian saints to get a job and provide for themselves:

2 Thess 3:10 12 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

We'll read 2 more passages, then close.
As the Most High God, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth, God will reign SUPREME:

Col 1:16-20 For by him were **all things** created,
 • that are in **heaven**, • and that are in **earth**,
 • visible (**those are on earth**) • and invisible (**those are in heaven**),
 (here's what those 'all things' are again, they have to do with governmental rule)
 whether they be • thrones, • or dominions,
 • or principalities, • or powers:

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**.

After the Mystery Program for the Body of Christ

moving into Heaven concludes

and the Prophesied Program for Israel

being resurrected in Earth concludes

1 Cor 15:22-28 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

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. (**Rev 20:14 says: And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**)

27 For he hath put **all things** under his feet. But when he saith **all things** are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put **all things** under him.

28 And when **all things** shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put **all things** under him, **that God may be all in all**.

Finally, we'll read again the text verse for the message title: The Fulness of Times:

Eph 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:

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