

Ephesians 1:10

The Administration of the Fullness of the Seasons

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Christ as the Center of All God's Purposes

Christ is the true and only center of the purposes of God, as it is only by Him the Holy Ghost reveals them. Hence it is, and must be in the proportion of our Spirit-taught acquaintance with Christ, that the divine plans are understood and appreciated. When He is not steadily kept before the soul, what becomes of the study of scripture itself? It is no longer truth which sanctifies, but barren theology which puffs up. And why has prophecy been perverted to unfruitful and injurious speculation? Because God's grand object has been lost sight of ("that in all things he might have the preeminence" one might perhaps apply here); and thereby the Spirit has been grieved, and has blown upon the busy exercises of man's mind. "He shall glorify me," said the Lord, "for He shall take of mine and show it unto you" (John 16:14). The moment the view of the glory of Christ is supplanted by researches into providence for instance, important as this may be in its place, the temple of prophecy degenerates into a countinghouse of human intellect; and the tables of those that traffic in mere erudition crowd its courts, until by the just judgment of God it is left desolate. But by His grace a better sanctuary is opened for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus crowned with glory and honor in the heavens. May we have grace to draw near through the rent veil, and there by our Master's side, with unshod feet and worshiping hearts, follow His eye and finger as they rest upon the spheres of His varied but harmonious glory!

"Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." There the Jewish prophet necessarily stopped. "But," says the apostle (1 Cor. 2) taking up the words, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world [or, the ages] unto our glory." How often we hear a member of the body of Christ quoting the words, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it," to justify an ignorance which the Spirit of God takes

pains to show us is no longer excusable. The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are now disclosed. Our position is the contrast of that of the Jews.

The Mystery of the Will of God: Ephesians 1:9-11

So in Ephesians, God caused grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that for an administration of the fullness of the seasons He might head up all things in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.

This is the great passage before us -- Eph. 1:9-11. It reveals the ultimate purpose of God for the entire universe: that all things, heavenly and earthly, shall be headed up, summed up, gathered together under Christ as their Head. This is "the administration of the fullness of the seasons" -- the divine economy that will operate when the times have all reached their appointed fullness, when God's purposes through all the ages have been completed, and the moment has arrived for their grand consummation.

The phrase "fullness of the seasons" points to a moment when all the separate streams of God's purpose in the various dispensations converge in one. There has been the dispensation of promise, of law, of grace -- each with its own character and its own partial revelation of God's mind. But the fullness of the seasons brings them all to their completion, and the administration of that fullness consists in the gathering up of all things into Christ.

Now it is almost needless to say that these set times are not yet completed, and that Christ has not yet all things in the heavens and on the earth headed up in Him, and that the church is not yet reigning joint-heir with Him. The purpose of God was, "that He might gather" or "gather together" etc. The object was not to express the time of the gathering; and this is so true, that usually the aorist

infinitive is expressed in Latin and English by the present. Moreover, as here, the infinitive of the aorist is often employed, where we might have expected that of the future, because the action is considered in itself concluded; and its future occurrence is sufficiently indicated by the governing verb, and the context generally.

Heavenly Things and Earthly Things United in Christ

The distinction between "the things in the heavens" and "the things upon the earth" in Eph. 1:10 is of the greatest importance for the understanding of God's purposes. It shows that the final administration of God's fullness is not confined to heaven, nor to earth, but embraces both. There will be a heavenly sphere of blessing and a heavenly sphere of government, as well as an earthly sphere. Both will be under Christ as Head.

The earthly sphere is what the Old Testament prophets foretold -- the restoration of Israel, the blessing of the nations, the reign of Messiah over the earth from Jerusalem. This is the "things upon the earth" of Eph. 1:10. It is real and literal and coming.

But there is also a heavenly sphere -- "the things in the heavens" -- which was hidden in past ages and has now been revealed. This is the calling of the church to be Christ's body and bride, to share His heavenly glory, to reign with Him over all things, seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is the distinctive revelation of the New Testament, the mystery that was not made known in other ages as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

Yet the Lord had intimated even to Nicodemus that God's kingdom has "heavenly things" as well as "earthly" {John 3:12}. Again He pointed out to the disciples the distinction of the Father's kingdom on high for the glorified saints, from the Son of man's kingdom below out of which are to be cleared those that

practise lawlessness {Matt. 13}. These truths paved the way for the Spirit to reveal that purpose of God for the heavens and all the things in them, and for the earth and all the things on it, to be set under Christ as the Head over all things to the church. Had this truth been received, it would have guarded saints from setting the one against the other, the common source of manifold error and evil. Here our brethren, like ourselves, have to take heed and learn.

The Practical Bearing: Christ the Center of Prophecy

The practical bearing of this truth is immense. If Christ is the center of all God's purposes -- if all things, heavenly and earthly, are to be headed up in Him -- then all study of prophecy that loses sight of Christ as its center is not only unprofitable but positively harmful. It is not the prophetic system, the times and seasons, the identification of the antichrist, or the measurement of the great tribulation, that should occupy the heart of the student of prophecy. It is Christ Himself -- His glory, His rights, His coming kingdom, His eternal headship over all creation.

The Old Testament saints had the earthly side of this truth: the kingdom of David, the restoration of Israel, the blessing of the nations. The New Testament has added the heavenly side: the rapture of the church, the Father's house, the bride and Bridegroom. Neither side should be neglected; neither should be set against the other. Both are comprehended in the fullness of God's purpose as revealed in Eph. 1:10.

In thus making it known, the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, with those to the Corinthians and others, have a primary place. And thus the saints are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone. The instruments of this special teaching are hence shown to be exclusively the New Testament apostles and prophets, as a joint class for this inspired work. But the New Testament in no way lacks the

richest testimony on things to come, as the Lord promised (John 16:13). Witness Matt. 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21; to speak only of the fuller predictions in the Synoptic Gospels, and in 2 Peter and Jude, but especially 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3; with the Revelation, the most abundant, systematic, and profound of all prophecies.

So it is to be, when the kingdom becomes *de facto*, as it is *de jure*, Jehovah's, and He is the ruler over the nations. When the dread scene of the cross drew near, was the prophetic word in vain? It is Christ, Whose love we know, Whose suffering we trust, Whose coming we expect, Who is and will be the center of all things -- the Head over all things to the church, the King over all the earth, the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

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