

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God

IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

#09-1517

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February 22, 2015

Purpose of the Ages

Did you know that the great physicist Albert Einstein said: *I shall never believe that God plays dice with the world?* How true! God does not gamble or roll the dice to see how things will turn out in a world created in His Son. *For in Him all things were created* (Colossians 1:16). Not only this, but man was created to be in the image of God and to have dominion over and be fruitful in the world created by the Son of God.

Do we honestly believe that God went to the effort of creating the universe and earth that is suspended within it, not knowing how it will turn out or where it is heading? Did God place a bet on what will happen? Does it have a 50-50 chance of turning out for the good, or is it 20-80 or some other percentage? Does God do things by chance or luck? No to all of these questions!

But, how can we be so sure that this is the correct answer? Well, it is correct because God has a purpose and a plan to achieve His purpose. It is that simple. If you have read much of my material, you know that there is one word that sums up God's purpose, and that is the word *All* or the phrase *all in all*. God intends to be all in all throughout His creation, and nothing can or will stop Him from achieving His purpose. How will He do this? He will do it through His Son becoming *all and in all*, and when this is achieved, the Son will hand the kingdom over to His Father so that He (God) may be *all in all*. Thus, the Son's purpose is to bring about the Father's ultimate purpose.

In this issue, let us consider Ephesians 3:11 and *a purpose of the ages*, according to Paul's context, which has to do with the one new man. In Paul's day and prior to the cross, as far as the Jews were concerned, mankind was divided into two groups along physical descent, the nation (*goy, ethnos*) of Israel and all the other nations (*goyim, ethne*).

Herod's temple was surrounded by a low balustrade called the *soreg* that was built, essentially, to keep out the so-called *gentiles* (*ethne, nations*) and the ceremonially unclean Jews. Inscriptions were placed on this low wall that forbade foreigners from crossing over under penalty of death. One such inscription, unearthed in our modern day, reads: *No alien is to enter within the balustrade and embankment about the sacred place. Whoever is caught will be responsible for his death, which will ensue.* However, we must not think this was God's doing. Through Isaiah, the Lord declared: *For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples* (Isaiah 56:7). There was to be no division in the Lord's house; this was man's doing, something that wasn't even seen in Solomon's temple. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he prayed for the foreigners (aliens) that *all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to reverence You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name.* How does stepping over a low wall to enter simply the outer court, not the inner courts, and dying lead to reverence of God?

This was the condition in Paul's day, but it is obvious that Paul referred to the division that was based on physical requirements (genealogy, the law, circumcision, etc.) and not so much man's division of the second temple. At any rate, *in Christ*, all walls, no matter what type they are, have been broken down. Mankind is no longer divided but united into a new humanity or a one new man in Christ who is all and in all. In God's plan of saving mankind, there is no longer Jew and gentile or any other designation, for that matter. One new man, one body! That's it!

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2:14-16 NASB)

With this context in mind, let us consider Ephesians 3:11. The bracketed words are from other translations.

To me—the less than the least of all the saints—was given this grace, among the nations [gentiles] to proclaim good news—the untraceable [unsearchable, unfathomable] riches of the Christ, and to cause all to see what is the fellowship [administration] of the secret [mystery] that hath been hid from the ages in God, who the all things did create by Jesus Christ, that there might be made known now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenly places, through the assembly [church, congregation], the manifold [all various, many-phased, diverse] wisdom of God, according to a [the] purpose of the ages [eternal purpose], which He made [purposed] in Christ Jesus our Lord ... through [by] the faith of him.... (Ephesians 3:8-12 YLT)

Paul was beside himself in amazement that the Lord would reveal to him something that was not even revealed to the ancient prophets. I believe the Lord's covenant with Abraham expressed God's intent for all the people of the earth; nevertheless, no one seemed to understand God's glorious intent until Paul was given revelation of it. It was not written out so anyone could understand it; it was hidden in God Himself. No wonder Paul was beside himself with this revelation. To him, it was *hid from the ages*, which is probably similar to our expression *down through the centuries*. Here Paul identifies the one new man with the *ecclesia*, the called-out ones, which is commonly called the *church*, and he joins the *ecclesia* with a purpose of the ages. As I have stated elsewhere, *eternal purpose* is not the correct translation of the Greek word *aion*, which stands for *age*.

However, some translations call it *a* purpose and others call it *the* purpose. Frankly, I do not know why. Use of the article *the* might indicate only one purpose, whereas use of the article *a* might indicate more than one purpose. Since God is interested in all mankind, not just what we call the *church* in our day, and Paul was focused entirely on the church at this point in his epistle, I am inclined to go with *a* purpose of the ages. Simply stated, there is *a* purpose for the *ecclesia*, and this purpose is connected with the ages to come (from the cross), not the ones that have gone before. By the way, the *Mitchell New Testament* calls it *a fore-designed plan of the ages*.

God's wisdom is multifaceted, probably more than we can imagine, and so is His ultimate purpose of *All*. However, to get to the fulfillment of His purpose, which actually comes at the consummation of the ages, God has a purpose for the *ecclesia*, and this purpose is to be made known to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies. God will put His people on display to the entire heavenly realm and to all forms of power and authority, but there is a purpose in it. So, what is this purpose? Paul gives us the answer.

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. (Ephesians 1:9-10 NASB)

He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all (Ephesians 1:20-23 NASB-CLV)

God's purpose of the ages is to sum up all things in His Son, both in the heavens and on earth. But here is the mystery of His will and the wisdom of God—He is going to do it through a people that are just like His Son, a people that are His complement, in His exact image. Jesus is not going to sum up all things alone; He is going to do it with and through His ecclesia, which is His body. He will complete the all in all through His glorified, immortal body in the ages to come until the consummation of the ages and all mankind and creation are fully released into the kingdom of glory. *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. His body will manifest the glory of God until it fills the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). This glory will manifest through Christ's body that will express the unfathomable love of God to all.

God has not rolled the dice; His purpose of the ages cannot and will not fail!