

# The Purpose of the Universe

## Ephesians 1:9-12

Turn with me if you would to the book of Ephesians, we find ourselves still in chapter one and we will be looking at verses 9-12. We find the whole purpose of this book written by Paul in verse 3. The whole purpose is that we are a truly blessed people, but not necessarily with material wealth or prosperity, or even recognition or power, but with things that we can't see. Things in the heavenly realm that we need to think about. Paul told the believers in the Colossian church in **Colossians 3:1-2**:

*Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth.*

And yet each and everyday we all fall into the trap of ignorance, only relying upon what we can see with our two eyes. We are a blessed people and we have been made victorious, yet if we fail to look at the realities that lie in heaven we may find ourselves living below our inheritance.

There's a story about a man who, in the 1920's wanted to come to America by boat. He purchased his ticket and began to prepare for his journey by packing crackers, jarred fruit and water. He did not want to starve so he made sure that he had enough for his entire trip. He couldn't afford the elaborate meals that were prepared on the boat so every meal he spent down in his cabin.

This went on for about a week or two. He began to make some friends with some of the staff and in a conversation towards the end of the trip, with one of the stewards the topic of food came up. The man voiced his desire to have at least one meal in the dining hall yet didn't have the funds to pay for it. The steward shook his head and said, "But sir, didn't you know that the fare that you paid to get on the boat covered all the meals in the dining room for the entire trip."

The man had failed to read the details and find print on the ticket and assumed that things were one way, when in reality it was something else.

I find that Christians all too often live this way. God tells us that we are blessed and yet because we fail to read the fine print or look at the details, we assume that things are a certain way, when in reality it is something else. We are blessed but until we are willing to see what that means and look at the realities of the heavenly realm (the area which we cannot see, where spiritual battles take place, where God's mercy and grace are in abundant supply each and everyday, and where we possess more than we think), until we begin to look at life through these truths, we will never live up to our full inheritance.

That is why we are studying this book because I believe that God wants us to understand what he has done for us, and allow that to change the way we live (not people's

expectations or how the world lives) but allow God’s love and kindness to change us each day. We come to **verse 9-12** and we see God’s plan for the universe. Look at Paul’s words:

*God’s secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure. And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ – everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as he decided long ago. His purpose was that we who were the first to trust in Christ should praise our glorious God.*

We see in this portion of scripture, describing God’s plan for this world, divided into four sections: 1. What is the plan. 2. How is it made known. 3. When will it be completed. And 4. What is our role in the plan.

I remember when being instructed in journalism in High School that in order to fully inform the reader you had to answer key questions: What, when, who, where and how. That is what Paul is doing for us here. In verse 10 he states “He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ.”

### **1. God will unite all things together in Jesus Christ.**

When Paul states all things, he isn’t just talking about the things that we can see but everything in heaven and on earth. The things we can see and the things we can’t – the invisible realm, heaven, the forces that are at work in our lives right now yet we can’t see or touch, evil and good, the evil principalities and power struggling with the angels – all things will be brought together.

In fact, the **Greek word for “together” in this verse is defined as “to head up”**. **That Jesus will head up everything and will be the director, the supreme operator, of everything both in heaven and on earth.** God’s ultimate plan is to bring everything back under the authority of Jesus Christ. We see a glimpse of this in Paul’s words to the Philippians in **Philippians 2:9-11**:

*Because of this (Because Jesus was willing to humble himself as a human being and take on the sins of the world), God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

God wants to bring everything under the leadership of Jesus Christ. I think we can all see, as we look around at this world that there isn’t one human being who can unite the world. This world needs unity, it talks about unity, but the reality is that there is still war and disagreements, there are still personal agendas, and even within ourselves we are divided.

**The unity of this world will only happen under the authority of Jesus Christ.** Men have tried, since the beginning of time to unite this world but have failed, but there is only one who can do it, and who plans to do it, and you and I will be able to experience it for ourselves. Paul also describes for us how this plan will take place and says that it is centered on the life of Jesus Christ.

## **2. In Jesus Christ we have the physical example of unity.**

How many of us understand that God's plans aren't always our own plans? **All of us understand that when God puts a plan in place it will probably be the exact opposite of what we would choose for ourselves.** God will bring unity and everything under the authority of Jesus Christ by means that would put us to shame.

When you look at the life of Jesus, it doesn't take one very long to see that his teachings and actions went against typical society. In the beatitudes Jesus makes statements like "happy are those who are poor, happy are those who mourn." When dealing with his disciples about who was the greatest among them, he sets a child in their midst and tells them that they will never be great until they learn like a child. The very ones that the religious people stayed away from because they were known as "unclean" people, were the ones that Jesus reached out to and ate with.

Jesus shows us that there is a new way of life, a way that goes against our normal response. In fact, **1 Corinthians 1:25** tells us:

*This "foolish" plan of God is far wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is far stronger than the greatest of human strengths.*

*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say, "God catches those who think they are wise in their own cleverness." **1 Corinthians 3:19***

God does things differently than we would do them. But Paul tells us in verse 10 that this plan that is centered on Jesus Christ, it has been revealed to us. Where do we find the descriptions of what Jesus did? In the scriptures. Man has a way of doing things on his own and we can see that it doesn't get very far. But God has a way of doing things that seem to make things worse at first, but eventually will lead to joy and blessing. God even said in **Isaiah 55:8-9**:

*"My thoughts are completely different from yours, "says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine." For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."*

In order for us to fully understand the plan and how it is going to happen, we need to be in God's word. This is the revelation and explanation of what life is about and how it will play itself out in the future.

The universe is operating according to a plan. God's plan is to unite everything under the headship of Jesus Christ, it is revealed to us through the life of Christ and is taking place according to God's wisdom and not our own. His way of doing things is different, so we need to read and understand God's word so that we can know what expect. Yet, we need to also realize that it is plan that will come to fulfillment.

Paul also explains to us the time when all this will be completed.

### **3. There is a time when God's plan will be finished.**

He tells us in verse 10 that at "**the right time**". In the Revised Standard Version it reads "**a plan for the fullness of time.**" Which in the Greek means "**at the completion of the seasons.**" The seasons that Paul is talking about here are the **cycles of history**.

Historians will tell you that history moves in cycles. There are times of peace and prosperity, which eventually move to apathy and laziness, which eventually leads to uncertainty and insecurity, and then to rebellion and revolution. This then begins the process all over again.

Paul is telling us that there is a time coming when all these seasons will come to an end – That there will be a day when the plan will be complete. How does that plan happen? **As we are challenged to live differently each day, as we face our struggles, pain, hurts and suffering, we not only allow God to tear down our human pride and arrogance, but we also allow him to build a new life.** When the old is destroyed, the new emerges.

Jesus has always been known for doing new things in people's lives. He is always changing us and challenging us. He allows things to happen in our lives so that when all is said and done, we are a new creation. And there will be a day when this whole world will be made new. But until that time, we shouldn't expect anything different from life.

So what is my part in this whole plan? That leads us to our fourth and final point this morning and we find it in **verse 12**:

*God purpose was that we who were the first to trust in Christ should praise our glorious God.*

Not only to we receive from God but he will receive from us. Yes, we receive his resources, his power, his strength, his love, his wisdom, his truth, but that should present a result in us of praise and worship of God. Not only do we receive an inheritance from God because of the work of Jesus Christ but –

### **4. We are Christ's inheritance.**

That is why later on in **verse 18** of Ephesians 1 Paul tells us:

*“I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people.”*

In the New Living Translation however there is a footnote about this particular verse especially in light of the last sentence here. It says that it can also read:

*“I want you to realize that we have become God’s inheritance.”*

<sup>18</sup> ***having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. RSV***

<sup>18</sup> *I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can see something of the future he has called you to share. I want you to realize that God has been made rich because we who are Christ's have been given to him! TLB*

God receives from us, he draws from us, he sees his abilities made strong in our weakness. **He sees his impact on our life and he receives his inheritance of delight and enjoyment in changing us and making us new.** The person I use to be, is no longer, and through a series of experiences and the operation of God’s plan, I am who I am today and that brings him great pleasure.

How does that make you feel about yourself? I was talking this whole idea through with Lynn yesterday and just much that changes a persons perception of this world. I know God’s loves me, I know he offers forgiveness to me, I know that he is always interested in doing things in my life, but the thought that he finds pleasure in seeing me change and allows that to be his wealth and inheritance. He sees that as the one things he grants his life for and finds joy in.

That changes my view of my self-worth. I may not like myself but God sees me as his inheritance and joy. It’s like the words of Paul when he told the church in **1 Thessalonians 2:19:**

*After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what is our proud reward and crown?  
It is you!*

Jesus thinks of you the same way. God puts a plan in place from the beginning of time, to bring everything under the authority or headship of Christ, to bring unity and restoration to mankind, allow our lives to not be a series of unfortunate events that lead to nothing, but all things happen for a reason. He is getting rid of the old human nature - the arrogance, the pride, the self-centeredness, and he is doing something new in us that will replace it.

His joy is in seeing his plan happen in us, his reward is seeing our lives changed, his inheritance (the thing his looks forward to) is to see his life bring about our new life.

And the fact that God does all of this for me, gives me a glimpse of God heart for me. Doesn't that do something within you this morning? "What gives me hope and joy and what is my proud reward and crown? It is You! You are a treasure to God. You are the apple of his eye. Let that thought change how you live and see life. Let's pray.