

Behold  he Lamb
Publications

God's Eternal Purpose

by Leroy Surface

God's Eternal Purpose

What was in the mind of God when He spoke the first words of creation? What was in his mind was His *“thought,”* which became His *“eternal purpose,”* which has yet to be realized. He would have a *“heavens and earth”* which would declare His glory, and the earth would be inhabited with men and women who were *“in the image and likeness of God.”* The Apostle Peter saw God's eternal purpose as a *“new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”* II Peter 3:13.

In the beginning, God created man *“in His image, and after His likeness.”* Lucifer was *“the anointed cherub that covereth”* until he had an evil thought. According to Isaiah, Lucifer said *“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: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High”* Isaiah 14:13-14. Thus the battle lines were drawn, and the conflict began. Lucifer, as the serpent in the garden, totally destroyed Adam and Eve with nothing more than a simple deception. The serpent became *“the god of this world,”* and for over six thousand years, has held the inhabitants of earth in bondage to a *“sin nature,”* which is nothing more

or less than the serpent's own nature.

When we look at the world around us today, it is easy to wonder, *“where is God?”* Obviously the spirit of anti-christ is taking possession of the nations, and anarchy is the rule of the day. So, where is God? For the almost two thousand years



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since Jesus Christ died on the cross to free us from sin, God has been preparing the population of the *“new heavens and new earth”* II Peter 3:13 which is yet to come, by saving those who believe. When this present evil world is literally *“on fire”* II Peter 3:10, those who have believed and trusted in Christ will be safe in the heavenly Jerusalem along with the righteous of every age. This present heavens and earth will *“pass away”* in a ball of fire, to make way for the new heaven and earth, which will be populated with the overcomers of every age. God will have exactly what He purposed in the beginning.

Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” Isaiah 14:24

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Introduction

The creation of the heavens and earth began as a single thought in the heart of God, and that “thought” became God’s “eternal purpose.” The Apostle Peter understood that purpose when he said, “*We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*” II Peter 3:13. The original creation, which God had created “*according to his eternal purpose*” Ephesians 3:11, had fallen due to Adam’s disobedience. At the close of the sixth day of creation, God made man in His image, and after His likeness, and the scripture says, “*And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*” Genesis 1:31. Even so, God’s original thought was not yet fulfilled. He had made a man and his wife in the image and likeness of God. His “purpose” would only be fulfilled when the earth was filled with people “*in the image and likeness of God.*” It was for this purpose God had told Adam and Eve, “*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*” Genesis 1:28. They were to fill the earth with their descendants, who would also be “*in the image and likeness of God.*” When the earth was thus filled, only then would God have His “eternal purpose.”

Before Adam and Eve could reproduce, however, they must be tested. For this, God placed two trees in the midst of the Garden, “*the tree of life,*” and “*the tree of knowledge of good and evil,*” which they were forbidden to eat of at the penalty of death. Had they chosen life (the tree of life), they would have lived forever in paradise and filled the earth after their kind. Instead, at the urging of the serpent, they chose the knowledge of good and evil, and received the penalty of death. They were driven out of paradise, and separated from the tree of life. Separated from God,

they became slaves to the serpent, and received his “image and likeness,” which we call “the sin nature.”

God’s purpose in Adam was thwarted by his disobedience and the entrance of sin into the world, but this did not change God’s “eternal purpose.” Adam had been created for God’s pleasure. What God created Adam to be, and what he was before the entrance of sin, would forever be God’s “*eternal purpose*” for all humanity. If this purpose was lost in the original creation, there would be a “*New Creation,*” II Corinthians 5:17 created in the image and likeness of God. If the heavens and earth were polluted and cursed by sin, there would be a “*new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*” II Peter 3:13. If the first man Adam disobeyed God and made all his descendants to be sinners by nature, there would be a “*second man*” I Corinthians 15:47 to “*make many righteous*” Romans 5:19 through His “*obedience unto death, even the death of the cross*” Philippians 2:8. If by that one man Adam, “*sin entered into the world, and death by sin*” Romans 5:12, there would be another man, the seed of a woman and the Son of God, who would offer His body and blood as a sacrifice to “*take away the sin of the world*” John 1:29. The sin nature which entered through Adam would be taken away by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Four thousand years passed before God sent Christ into the world “*to make an end of sins*” and “*to bring in everlasting righteousness*” Daniel 9:24-25. The night before Christ suffered and died on the cross, He prayed a prayer which seemed to set the terms for which He was willing to suffer and die. He prayed, “*And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*” John 17:5.

The term “*before the world was*” does not speak of before the creation of the heavens and earth, but before Adam disobeyed God with the result that sin entered into the world and the serpent (the devil) became “*the god of this world.*” The entrance of sin was the beginning of “*this present evil world*” Galatians 1:4. Over

four thousand years had passed since the entrance of sin, and in all those years there was not one found who bore the image and likeness of God. There were those who “*believed God,*” like Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, who were “*counted to be righteous*” for their faith, but not one of these were in the image and likeness of God. As great as these were, and other men and women of faith beside them, who fulfilled the purpose of God in their generation, not one of them was “*the eternal purpose.*” The earth was filled with devil worshipers and God haters, and even the nation of Israel, whom God had chosen to be His “special people” were repeatedly turning away and rejecting God who had brought them out of bondage to Pharaoh, but could not deliver them from the bondage in their hearts.

It was because of these things the eternal “Word” John 1:1-3, 14 became a man for the sole purpose of dying on the cross. He was sent into the world to “*make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity,*” and to “*bring in everlasting righteousness*” Daniel 9:24-25. In order to do this, He must “*bruise the head of the serpent*” Genesis 3:15, and “*destroy the works of the devil*” 1 John 3:8, yet to do these things would require His death on the cross.

*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;** And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* Hebrews 2:14-15

Jesus Christ would not die in vain. Paul would later write of Jesus, “*who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*” Hebrews 12:2. This “joy” was set before Christ even before His incarnation.

*“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. **Wherefore when he** (Christ) **cometh***

into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” Hebrews 10:4-5

For fifteen hundred years, the priests of Israel had offered daily sacrifices that could not “take away sin.” Hebrews 10:4. Christ came into the world to “do the will of His Father.” He would offer His own body and blood as the only sacrifice that could “take away the sin of the world” John 1:29. His blood was holy blood, the only blood that could “cleanse from all sin” I John 1:7.

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10

Lucifer’s Ambition

The prophet Isaiah was without a doubt the greatest among the prophets of God. Very often he prophesied of things to come in the distant future as though he was an eye-witness of the event. For example, Isaiah described the sufferings of Christ at Calvary as though he were a news reporter giving a blow by blow account of what he had seen and heard:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” Isaiah 53:3-7

When Isaiah prophesied the downfall and destruction of Lucifer, he did so as though Christ had already died and Lucifer were already cast down. His "prophecy" was actually in the form of a

taunt against Lucifer. God had said, *"And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, That **thou shalt take up this proverb** against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!"* Isaiah 14:3-4.

The king of Babylon in this verse is representative of Lucifer, the devil. Isaiah was actually mocking the devil with *"this proverb"* 700 years before Christ accomplished his destruction through death on the cross Hebrews 2:14. He spoke as one who lived on this side of the cross in the state of redemption, and understood the total victory Christ won over the devil at Calvary. He taunted the devil with these words; *"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!**"* Isaiah 14:12

"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: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Isaiah 14:13-14

Lucifer, with all his power to *"weaken the nations"* had *"said in his heart"* words that were nothing more than the vain words of a braggart, because he had exalted himself against God. Isaiah continued his taunt against the devil; *"**Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit**"* Isaiah 14:15. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born to Mary, Isaiah told the devil what awaited him at both the first and second coming of Christ to earth.

*"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and **cast him into the bottomless pit...**"*

Revelation 20:1-3

“They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”

Isaiah 14:16-17

Those who “*see Jesus as He is*” are transformed into His likeness. The Apostle John said, “...*we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” I John 3:2. Those who see Lucifer “*as he is,*” are immediately freed from all fear of what he may do.

*“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was **cast out** into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, **Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.**”*

Revelation 12:9-11

Do you see your adversary, the devil, as “*cast out*” and “*cast down?*” This is what happened when Christ died on the cross. Notice verse 10: “***Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ.***” Notice verse 11: “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb....*”

The moment Christ died and the blood and water poured out of His side was the moment salvation came, because “*that old serpent*” that deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden, and “*deceiveth the whole world*” was “*cast out*” of heaven and “*cast down*” to earth. Michael and his angels had fought with the dragon and his angels from the day of Lucifer’s rebellion, and could not prevail until the blood of Christ was shed. Michael and his angels were the first to overcome the devil “*by the blood of the Lamb.*” That same blood has made every child of God to be an overcomer also.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Romans 5:6

Not only did “*salvation*” come with the shedding of the blood of Christ, but “*salvation, and **strength**, and the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ.*” This pinpoints the death of Jesus Christ as the moment “*the kingdom of God*” and “*the power of His Christ*” were established. “*Christ is the kingdom of God,*” and those who “*abide in Christ*” are living in the kingdom of God. Isaiah spoke of this when he said, “*But there **the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby***” Isaiah 33:21. “*No galley with oars*” nor “*gallant ship*” tells us there are no enemy vessels in the broad rivers and streams. We are safe from every adversary while we abide in Christ.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” Revelation 12:11

Where do you dwell? Jesus said of His people, “*these are in the world*” John 17:12, but “*they are not of the world*” John 17:16. The scripture speaks of those who “*dwell in the heavens,*” and those who “*inhabit the earth.*” Which are you? The Greek word which was translated “*dwell*” means “*to occupy.*” Those who “*dwell in the heavens*” actually “*occupy the heavens*” while they are “*strangers and pilgrims on earth*” Hebrews 11:13. The Greek word for “*inhabit*” means “*to house permanently.*” Those who “*house permanently*” on earth are those who “*...love the world and **the things that are in the world.***” John said, “*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” I John 2:15. Those who “*love the things that are in the world*” make themselves the prey of the devil, whom the scripture says is “*come down unto you, having great wrath*” Revelation 12:12.

God's Purpose

“The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:” Isaiah 14:24

In ancient times when enemy kings would prepare for battle against one another, it was a tradition for each of them to make great boasts of what they were going to do to their adversary and the great victory they would win. This was done in an effort to gain the psychological advantage of intimidation. The fourteenth chapter of Isaiah exposes Lucifer's scheme in his own words; *“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...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds...I will be like the most High.”* God responded to Lucifer in the same chapter, with no threats, but simply stating the facts: *“Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass.”* God had no “plan B” in case His first plan did not work. Lucifer could do his worst. He could *“weaken the nations”* Isaiah 14:12. He could *“make the earth to tremble;”* he could *“shake kingdoms;”* Isaiah 14:16, but he could not change *“the thought of God”* which He had before He created, nor could he keep that “thought” from coming to pass. *“...as I have thought, so shall it come to pass...”* Before God created anything, He had a “thought.” He knew what He would create, and how it would be. Before He created man, His thought was *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”* Genesis 1:26. The thoughts of God are steadfast and sure. Everything God created was according to His original thought, and He has never changed His mind.

“...as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” The purpose of God is eternal. After all is done, and the smoke of conflict has cleared, There will be a *“new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness”* II Peter 3:13. All the inhabitants will be a *“new creation, created in the image and likeness of the Son of God”*

Romans 8:29. This is what God created in the beginning, and it is what He will have. It is His “*eternal purpose.*”

“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” Isaiah 14:26-27

The New Creation

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”
Genesis 1:1

We do not know for certain when “the beginning” was. Some believe it was trillions of years ago, and some believe it was only six thousand years ago. We really have no way of knowing for certain, because “the beginning” was in “eternity” before the beginning of time. We do know, however, that man “*in the image and likeness of God*” was the last thing God created. Everything else had been created before man, and for man. The scripture says God put all the works of His hands under the feet of man Psalms 8:6, Hebrews 2:8. When the man disobeyed God, he brought sin into the world, and death entered with sin Romans 5:12. Everything God had created, being “*under the feet of the man,*” was contaminated with sin and came under the curse of sin. The only remedy to retain God’s eternal purpose was a “new creation,” including a “*new heavens and new earth*” Isaiah 65:17. This time, however, in the “new creation,” God would create a “new man” first, and the “new heavens and new earth” will be the last thing created in the new creation. The new heavens and earth will not exist until the first heavens and earth have passed away. John in “the Revelation” said, “*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away*” Revelation 21:1. This will not come to pass until a thousand years after the second coming of Christ to earth. Yet, almost two thousand years have passed since God created a “new man” on earth and a “new

Jerusalem” in heaven. The Apostle Paul described the “new creation” of man in this way;

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” II Corinthians 5:17-18

Notice that I have struck through the word “things” in every place it was used in this scripture. The “new creation” presently is not about “things” and does not contain “things.” Every person “in Christ” is a “new creation.” The “old creation” (the old man) has “passed away,” having been “crucified with Christ” Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20. “All (every person in Christ) are become new.” The word “become” in this place was translated from the Greek word “ginomai,” which means “to cause to be” or “to come into being.” The “new man” is not a renovation of “the old man.” The old man has passed away, and every child of God is a brand new creation. The Apostle Paul said, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast” Ephesians 2:8-9. He explains what “saved by grace” means in the next verse; “**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them**” Ephesians 2:10. “We are His workmanship” explains the words “not of works” in the previous verse. We are not saved by “our works,” but by “His works.” We are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” Notice “His workmanship” is not a “process;” He does not “mold us” as a potter “molds the clay;” We are not the result of “spiritual evolution,” but as “His workmanship,” we are “His creation,” a “new creation” made in the image and likeness of the Son of God.

The New Jerusalem

Coinciding with the new creation of man on earth, God created a “New Jerusalem” in heaven. The New Jerusalem was built for Abraham and “*his seed.*” The scripture says of Abraham, “*By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*” Hebrews 11:9-10. The New Jerusalem did not exist in Abraham’s day, but according to the scripture, it was built for Abraham and others who “*died in faith*” before Christ died on the cross.

*“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.** For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore **God is not ashamed to be called their God: FOR HE HATH PREPARED FOR THEM A CITY.**”* Hebrews 11:13-16

Those who “died in faith” from the time of Adam’s fall until Christ died on the cross all went to a place which Jesus called “paradise” Luke 23:43. Jesus spoke of this in the parable of “the rich man and Lazarus.” Abraham and all the righteous dead were in this place, which was separated from the place called “Hell” by a great gulf. The rich man died and went to hell, but Lazarus died and went to paradise to be comforted by Abraham in his bosom. We know by the scriptures that “hell” will be cast into the Lake of fire along with the wicked dead and “*whosoever was not found written in the book of life*” Revelation 20:14-15. This will not take place until a thousand years after the return of Jesus Christ to earth. Paradise, however, along with all those Old Testament saints who

had “died in faith, were transferred to heaven at the moment of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the heavenly Jerusalem, Hebrews 12:22 which Paul called “*Jerusalem which is above*” Galatians 4:26. This is the “*New Jerusalem*” which John saw “*coming down from God out of heaven*” Revelation 21:2.

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

Hebrews 12:22-24

The Apostle Paul had not begun his missionary ministry, and was still known as Saul of Tarsus when he was “*caught up into paradise*” II Corinthians 12:4. This was at the end of a three year period of solitude for Saul, during which he was taught the gospel “*by revelation of Jesus Christ*” Galatians 1:12. He wasn’t taught by man, nor did he “*confer with flesh and blood*” Galatians 1:16. Saul of Tarsus was taught by God alone, and at the end of the three year period, he was “*caught up into paradise,*” where he “*heard unspeakable words*” I Corinthians 12:4 and received “*abundance of revelations*” I Corinthians 12:7. He saw and heard things no other was so blessed to see and hear. He was there, in the midst of “*an innumerable company of angels,*” and “*the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.*” He was in the presence of “*God the judge of all,*” and “*Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.*” He saw “*the spirits of just men made perfect.*” Among these were Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and his wife Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and all the men and women of faith who died in faith. All these had “*died in faith, not receiving the promise,*” but the moment Christ shed His precious blood, they were “*cleansed*” from the sin nature, and “*perfected forever*” Hebrews 10:14 as God’s eternal purpose. When Christ was

raised from the dead, they were translated from paradise below into the heavenly Jerusalem, which is “paradise above.”

*“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: **God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.**”* Hebrews 11:39-40

In the heavenly Jerusalem are “*the spirits of just men made perfect*” Hebrews 12:23. This speaks of all those in the Old Testament times who “*died in faith, not receiving the promise*” Hebrews 11:13. According to the scripture, God has provided a “*better thing for us,*” inasmuch as those who “*died in faith*” under the Old Covenant could not “*be made perfect*” without us, yet it is obvious they were perfected when Christ died and shed His precious blood. That being the case, it is even more obvious that those under the New Covenant of grace who “*know the truth*” John 8:32 and “*trust in Christ*” Ephesians 1:12 were also “*perfected forever*” when Christ died on the cross and shed His precious blood.

Perfected Forever

“...WE ARE SANCTIFIED through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10

“For by one offering he hath PERFECTED FOR EVER them that are sanctified.” Hebrews 10:14

If we can believe it to receive it, the “*one offering*” of the body of Jesus Christ has sanctified and perfected both the Old Testament saints and everyone who would afterwards believe the truth and “*trust in Christ*” Ephesians 1:11. When we speak of “*perfect,*” however, we must point out the proper definition as used in the scripture is “*complete.*” Paul continued in the next two verses to tell exactly what that “*perfection,*” or “*completion,*” is:

“Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with

them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:15-16

In the book of Romans, Paul preached the gospel as “*crucified with Christ*” Romans 6:6-7. Notice those who are “*crucified with Him*” in the sixth verse are said to be “*freed from sin*” in the seventh verse. In the same chapter, the apostle said, “*Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*” Romans 6:18. Those who are “*freed from sin*” no longer have a “sin nature.” Jesus died on the cross as “*The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” John 1:29. Where sin once reigned in our hearts, righteousness now reigns. Our new nature is to do those things which please God, because “His laws” are written in our hearts.

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

Romans 6:22

The child of God is no longer a sinner, and does not sin. More wonderful than the fact they do not sin is the fact “*their fruit is holiness.*” Believers have often been taught to “strive for perfection,” while being told at the same time, they can never obtain it in this lifetime. Those who are yet concerned about the sin problem most often struggle to be holy before God. We must understand that “perfection,” which is foretold by Jesus, Matthew 5:48 and “*holiness, without which no man shall see God*” Hebrews 12:14, cannot be obtained through struggling and striving. Those who have “true holiness” did not obtain it through any of their efforts; it is the natural fruit of those who have been “*born of God.*”

The Apostle John, writing at least twenty years after the death of the other apostles, preached the same gospel in this manner:

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”

I John 3:6

The gospel which John preached was “common knowledge” to every “believer” in his day, as proven by the words “*and ye know*” in this verse. In fact, the apostle used the word “know” in all its forms thirty eight times in his first epistle, concluding with these three verses:

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” I John 1:18

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” I John 5:19

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.” I John 5:20

Who will we believe?

It is very obvious that the apostles understood many things which most of the modern church refuses to believe. For example, Paul understood that those who are “*crucified with Christ*” Romans 6:6 are also “*freed from sin*” Romans 6:7. The modern church says “*nobody is free from sin.*” John said “*whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not*” I John 3:5. The modern church says “*everybody sins.*” Again Paul said of Jesus Christ, “*By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified*” Hebrews 10:14. And again, the modern church proclaims loud and clear, “*nobody is perfect.*” Why do we choose to believe the spiritual ignorance of modern theologians and deny what the original apostles of Jesus Christ said? The controversy is not that this writer does not believe the doctrine of the modern church; the controversy is, the modern church does not believe the testimony of God as revealed through His holy apostles and prophets in the scriptures.

“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” I John 5:10

Rather than believe the record which God gave in the scriptures, the modern church has chosen to believe what several medieval teachers and religious scholars taught. Many medieval teachers believed truth could be received from observing nature and studying philosophy as well as from the scriptures. Martin Luther broke from this tradition in what he called “*sola scriptura*” which means “*by scripture alone.*” In fact, Luther pointed out five “*solas*” which are well worth mentioning; “*by scripture alone, by faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone, and the glory to God alone.*” I agree 100% with Luther concerning these five necessary truths, but the question I set forth is “*What is the end result of these five “solas?”* What is salvation? What is grace?

Much of the modern church believes “*grace*” is a covering for sin; that “*grace*” is given to take sinners to heaven. This brings us to the question, “*What is salvation?*” The angel Gabriel told Joseph before Jesus was born to Mary, “*Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins*” Matthew 1:21. Gabriel also told the prophet Daniel of Christ’s coming into the world to “*...make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness...*” Daniel 9:24-25. John the Baptist announced Jesus to all Judea, saying, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” John 1:29.

If we are to agree with Martin Luther concerning “*by scripture alone, by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone, and glory to God alone,*” we must understand the product of these is a new creation man or woman who is “*crucified with Christ*” Romans 6:6, “*freed from sin*” Romans 6:7, and “*created in Christ Jesus*” Ephesians 2:10 in the image and likeness of the Son of God Romans 8:29. We cannot save ourselves from sin, and we cannot make ourselves pure within; this is why Christ died, and what salvation is. Luther was correct in telling us the method, which was “*justification by faith,*” but he never understood or revealed the result of such salvation.

*“...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, **turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness**...”*

Jude 1:3-4

Near the end of the first generation of the church, Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, told of how the gospel truth of the grace of God had been corrupted into a “*lascivious doctrine*.” No one in the history of the church has succeeded in correcting the error, which “error” is presently received as “orthodox doctrine” by most teachers in the modern church. Certainly there have been great men of God throughout the centuries, but all were influenced by the traditions of the church more than the doctrine of Christ as given by the apostles. Why would anyone trust in the ancient “Catholic Councils” to give us the truth when we have the record of Peter, Paul, and John, as well as the Old Testament prophets? Luther and Calvin, perhaps men of God for their day, were only one step away from the darkness that had ruled the world for over a thousand years. Why do we believe they understood more than the eye-witness apostles? We have the same scriptures they had, and it is obvious they never saw but a tiny portion of the “truth” that Jesus said “*shall make you free*” John 8:32. Why do we hold to their dogma and reject the clear teachings of the apostles Paul and John as recorded in the scriptures (KJV)? Who will we believe? I will take my stand with the apostles, and most especially the revelations of both Paul and John.

The Mystery of Christ

*“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me **the mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my*

knowledge in **the mystery of Christ**) 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 **that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 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.**” Ephesians 3:1-7

The Apostle Paul spoke of “mysteries” seventeen times in his epistles. In this text, he reveals the “mystery of Christ,” which is so incredibly simple most teachers cannot see it. It is not a mystery about Christ, but it is something the Jews totally lost sight of during their 1500 years under the Law of Moses, and was only recently revealed, first to Paul, then to Peter and the other apostles. Simply stated, the “mystery of Christ” is *“that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”* This was not something “new” God was doing, but that which He had purposed from the beginning. When God first revealed Himself to Abraham, He said *“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 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”* Genesis 12:1-3.

Notice the last promise in this text: *“In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”* At that time, a little over 400 years after the flood, there were only three families. Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah were still alive, and every living person on earth were members of one of these three families. Out of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, came every race and color of people on earth, and God promised *“the blessing of Abraham”* would come upon them all. Many years later, when God blessed Abraham for offering his son Isaac on the altar to God, He said

*“...and in thy seed shall **all the nations of the earth** be blessed.”*

Genesis 22:18

*“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, **In thee shall all nations be blessed**. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, *The just shall live by faith*. And the law is not of faith: but, *The man that doeth them shall live in them*. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: **That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**” Galatians 3:8-14*

Why Saul of Tarsus was chosen

*“**That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs**, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: **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.” Ephesians 3:6-7*

Hear what the apostle is saying; *“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs...I was made a minister.”* On the same day He ascended to the Father, Jesus gave to His disciples *“the great commission”* to *“go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* Mark 16:15. After the day of Pentecost, however, they stayed in Jerusalem for over three years until they were driven out by the persecution which Saul of Tarsus raised against the church. The record of this was given as follows: *“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, **preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.**”*

Acts 11:19. Only Peter had recently given the gospel to the Roman centurion, Cornelius, after much persuading from God, but this seemed to be a onetime event. The mindset of the church seemed to be that salvation was for the Jews only. It is amazing that God had to save Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the church, to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the gentile nations.

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.” Ephesians 3:7

In the next chapter of this epistle, Paul writes, “*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ*” Ephesians 4:7. Four verses later, he said, “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*” Ephesians 4:11. These “ministries” which I have placed in bold print are different measures of the gift of Christ, the apostles having the greatest measure, followed by the prophets, and the others in their order. Paul was given the measure of an apostle, and perhaps the greatest measure of Christ ever given to a man. Notice, his ministry was “*according to (equal to) the gift of the grace of God*” which was given to him “*by the effectual working of His power.*” Saul of Tarsus had received the baptism with the Holy Ghost three days after his conversion on the Damascus Road Acts 9:3-6, Acts 9:17. “*And straightway (immediately) he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*” Acts 9:20. It was over three years later, however, that Saul received “*the gift of the grace of God.*”

Why Grace is given

There are three things which Paul said the grace of God was given him to accomplish.

1. “**To preach among the Gentiles**” the unsearchable riches of Christ.
2. “**To make all men see**” the fellowship of the mystery.

3. **“To the intent”** that the angels in heaven might know the manifold wisdom of God.

1: *“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 ...**”* Ephesians 3:8

The Apostle Peter wrote in his first epistle of *“the salvation”* that Christ brought to us through His sufferings and death on the cross. He said the prophets of the Old Testament saw this salvation afar off, and called it *“the grace that should come unto you”* I Peter 1:10. They had heard from *“the Spirit of Christ which was in them”* verse 11 of *“the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow”* I Peter 1:11.

Notice first of all, the prophets of old spoke of our great salvation as *“the grace”* that would come with *“the sufferings of Christ.”* If Christ had only *“taken our punishment,”* perhaps grace would be what the majority believe today, only *“a covering for sins.”* Consider, however, that *“the grace”* which was seen by the prophets was also *“the glory”* that would come after Christ died and rose again. It is would be easy for us to believe *“the glory which should follow”* was that which was manifested on the Day of Pentecost, but it is so much more than that. It is the *“glory”* of a *“New Creation”* II Corinthians 5:17, *“created in Christ Jesus”* Ephesians 2:10. It is a people such as had never been seen since the day Adam disobeyed God and brought sin into the world. They are *“freed from sin”* Romans 6:7, 18, 22, and they *“abide in Christ”* and *“do not sin”* I John 3:5-6, 9.

For over nineteen hundred years since Jude warned that *“the grace of God”* had been *“turned into lasciviousness”* Jude 1:4, the vast majority of the church has been confused concerning what is *“grace.”* Most have been taught that grace is given to cover sins so God could take sinners to heaven. What a horrible thought to those who have received *“the love of the truth”* II Thessalonians 2:10-11. Paul said the grace of God was given to him to *“preach among the Gentiles (every nation) the unsearchable riches of Christ.”*

So very many false teachers have arisen in this last generation to teach the “*unsearchable riches of Christ*” are manifested as great prosperity in “*the things of this world.*” The Apostle John said, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” I John 2:15.

2: “*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...*” Ephesians 3:9

The gospel of Jesus Christ must not only be “preached” in all the world, but it must also be “seen” in those who preach it, as well as in those who believe it. Notice in this verse Paul was given “*grace ...to make all men see*” something that had been “*hid in God*” since “*the beginning of the world.*” The “beginning of the world” does not speak of the creation of the heavens and earth, but rather it speaks of the “beginning” of “*this present evil world*” Galatians 1:4, which began with the disobedience of Adam and the entrance of sin. God created man in His own image and likeness, but man “*in the image and likeness of God*” was never seen from the time Adam fell until Christ came into the world. There was a four thousand year period from the fall of Adam until the birth of Jesus Christ in which the “eternal purpose” Ephesians 8:11 was “hidden in God” until Christ came. The Apostle Paul spoke to Timothy of the “eternal purpose” when he said, speaking of God, “*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ...*” II Timothy 1:9-10.

Notice that Paul again speaks of “*before the world began,*” speaking of the entrance of sin, and the “*foundation of this present evil world.*” He speaks of God’s “*purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*” God’s “*purpose and grace*” is what God created man to be, “*in*

His own image and likeness.” If there is any question about what God’s “*purpose and grace*” is for the children of God, Paul said it was “*made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.*” If you have any question about what God’s “eternal purpose” for man is, look to Jesus.

It is one thing for the preacher to point the people to Jesus, which we must all do. Far more effective, however, is for the preacher who “preaches Christ” to be “a manifestation of Christ.” Paul said, “*Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*” Corinthians 4:1-2. Notice he was willing to “*commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*”

Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?*” John 8:46. The Jews were forever trying to prove Jesus was a sinner. Why do so many modern “theologians” seek to prove the Apostle Paul was a sinner? If he was a sinner, he must have been incredibly “self-righteous,” and totally unworthy to be believed in anything he said. He said of himself, “*Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe*” I Thessalonians 2:10. The Apostle Paul was in fact a manifestation of the truth he preached and the Christ he served.

3: “*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God...*” Ephesians 3:10

God’s “*intention*” when giving “*this grace*” Ephesians 3:8 to Paul reached into heaven itself. The wording of this verse is somewhat vague and obscure, but in plain language, God intended that the angels in heaven would understand the incarnation of Christ and His death on the cross. Angels are not “*omniscient*,” meaning they do not know all things. Their “purpose” from the beginning

was to serve those who were “created in the image and likeness of God.” With the fall of Adam and the entrance of sin, 1/3rd of the angels joined Lucifer in the rebellion. If Christ died for sin, and those who believe in Him continue in sin, the angels can only believe His death was in vain, that it did absolutely nothing of eternal value. When, however, the angels see the “*glorious church*” ^{Ephesians 5:27}, filled with believers who are “*created in the image and likeness of the Son of God,*” they understand the “*manifold wisdom*” of “*Christ crucified.*”

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” ^{Ephesians 1:22-23}

I have never seen such a church as Paul describes in this verse, but the angels in heaven have. When the world around us see a weak and sinful church as in the world today, they can only conclude there is nothing to it, and that Jesus’ death accomplished nothing. When Paul described the church as “*His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all,*” he had seen such a church. The “*hundred and twenty*” on the Day of Pentecost became such a church. It was made up of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, with every member of the body full of the Holy Ghost, and given “*the manifestation of the Spirit*” ^{1 Corinthians 12:7}. These were from the first day, a people such as had not existed since the day Adam disobeyed God and sin entered into the heart of the man. In fact, the world had never seen such as these hundred and twenty. Adam’s and Eve’s fall took place before their first child was born. Their firstborn son, Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, had never seen his mom and dad “*in the image and likeness of God.*” Adam and Eve were bound in chains of total depravity because of the entrance of sin.

To the Praise of His Glory

The sight of the hundred and twenty who were filled with the Holy Ghost shook Jerusalem to the core. Three thousand were

saved Acts 2:41; five thousand were saved Acts 4:4; and “...*multitudes, both men and women*” Acts 5:14 were added to the church. This church was from the first day “*the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.*” There were signs which followed these believers; they “*spake with new tongues;*” they “*cast out devils;*” they “*laid hands on the sick, and they recovered*” Mark 16:17-18. “*And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*” Mark 16:20.

There are those in this 21st century church who are trying to “learn how” to do the things the first church did. They are deceived. The first eleven verses of Ephesians tell of many things which God did for man in redemption “...*that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ*” Ephesians 1:12. It is an obvious truth that we must “*be*” before we can “*do.*” Those who “*first trusted in Christ*” were the hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost. What were they? They were a “new creation” II Corinthians 5:17, “*created in the image of Him that created them*” Colossians 3:10. “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...*” Ephesians 2:10.

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Ghost came upon Him and the Father spoke from heaven, saying “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Jesus was about thirty years of age at the time. In those thirty years, He had never sinned or done anything to grieve His Father. It wasn’t that He had greater “will-power” than others. It was because He was in fact the Son of God. Those in the faith movement who teach Jesus did nothing as the Son of God, but did everything as a natural man “*through faith, fasting, and prayer,*” are deceived. Everything Jesus did on earth, He did as the Son of God. He was the image and likeness of His Father, yet at thirty years of age, at the time God introduced Him as “...*my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,*” Jesus had never performed a miracle, healed the sick, or cast out a devil. What He was, even before the Holy Ghost came upon Him, brought great glory to His Father.

When Paul gave the litany of things Christ did in redemption “*that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ*” Ephesians 1:12, he spoke of the hundred and twenty Jews who were the first to “*trust in Christ.*” When the Holy Ghost came upon the hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost, this was the Father’s approval of His new born sons and daughters. This “approval” was not based upon anything they had done, but upon what they “were.” They had all been sinners in times past, but now they were “*washed,*” they were “*sanctified,*” they were “*justified*” I Corinthians 6:11, in that order, and in a moment of time without a “process.” They were as sinless as Jesus had been, because “sin” had been taken away by Christ on the cross, for everyone who would believe and trust in Him. God was “*well pleased*” with the hundred and twenty, and His “approval” came in the form of a mighty “*baptism with the Holy Ghost.*” It was perhaps weeks later that the first miracle took place at the gate beautiful of the temple where Peter raised up the lame man “*in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.*” The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was proven to the multitude of Jews and five thousand were added to the church that same day.

For the church to exist “*to the praise of His glory,*” it must be “*His body*” and “*the fullness of Him who filleth all in all.*” It must be made up of “new creations,” who are “*conformed to the image of the Son of God*” Romans 8:29.

The Eternal Purpose

“*According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Ephesians 3:11

Notice that God’s “eternal purpose” is what He “*purposed in Christ Jesus.*” The word “purpose,” which is used two times in this one verse, was translated from two different Greek words. The first, used in “*eternal purpose*” speaks of God’s original intent; what He “set forth” when He said, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” Genesis 1:26. The second usage is

translated from the Greek word “*poieo*,” and speaks of what He “*made*” in Christ Jesus our Lord. What Adam was before entrance of sin, and what Jesus Christ was in His thirty three years before the cross were both equal to God’s “eternal purpose.” The “*new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*” will be populated with a “*new creation*” of people who are “*in the image of the Son of God.*” We who are “*born of God*” are that “*new creation*” right now II Corinthians 5:17. The original creation of man in the image and likeness of God was before the entrance of sin. The “*new creation*” in the image and likeness of God could not exist until after “*the sin*” that entered through Adam’s disobedience, was “*taken away*” by the obedience of Jesus Christ to the death of the cross. When John the Baptist introduced Jesus as “*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*” John 1:29, he understood that Christ was sent into the world “*to make an end of sins*” Daniel 9:24-25, which he would do through His death on the cross. Both the “*sin nature*” and the “*Law of Moses*” were nailed to the cross with Christ, and we who believe this and trust in Jesus Christ are “made free” John 8:32 from both sin and the law.

Exalted by the Gospel

*“I knew a man in Christ **above fourteen years ago**, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was **caught up into paradise**, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory (boast): yet of myself I will not glory (boast), but in mine infirmities.”*

II Corinthians 12:2-5

The words “*above fourteen years ago*” places this experience several years before Saul of Tarsus became known as “the Apostle Paul.” In fact, this amazing experience was to prepare Saul of Tarsus for the ministry yet to come. It was not a “reward,” but a “preparation.”

“For though I would desire to glory (boast), I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.” II Corinthians 12:6

Paul wanted to tell everything he had seen and experienced when he was caught up into paradise, but he restrained himself, not wanting people to think of him as being something more than they saw him to be. Very often there are ministers who give themselves exalted titles (apostle, prophet or prophetess, etc.) which demand the respect of those they minister to, yet they have no evidence of being what they profess to be.

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.” II Corinthians 12:7

Perhaps one of the more foolish doctrines of the modern church states that the Apostle Paul received so many revelations from God that he became proud and puffed up in the flesh to the extent that God had to afflict him to keep him humble. Jesus said, *“Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”* Luke 14:11. The Apostle Paul had previously questioned the Corinthians, *“Have I committed an offence in **abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?**”* II Corinthians 11:7. Christ died to exalt fallen man to the image and likeness of the Son of God Romans 8:29. The purpose of *“abundance of revelations”* is to bring this about in the life of the individual believer. Saul of Tarsus did not exalt himself; it was God who exalted him. He had been, in his own words, *“...a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious...”* I Timothy 1:13. Christ had saved him when he was on his way to Damascus on a mission to persecute the church in that city Acts 9:3-6. Three days later in Damascus, he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and immediately began to preach to the Jews in their synagogues that *“Christ is the Son of God”* Acts 9:20, and proving

by the scriptures that *“this (Jesus) is very Christ”* Acts 9:22. Saul eventually had to flee for his life from Damascus, and went to Jerusalem, where he stirred up the Grecians against him, and was sent away by the apostles to Damascus Acts 9:29-31. Rejected by the Jews at Damascus, the Grecians in Jerusalem, and ultimately the apostles also, he entered a three year period in which he *“conferred not with flesh and blood”* Galatians 1:15-16.

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 1:11-12

During the next three years, while ostracized by man, Saul of Tarsus was given the revelation of Jesus Christ from the Lord Himself. This was not an overnight revelation, but as the prophet Isaiah said, the revelation came *“...precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little, and there a little”* Isaiah 28:10. For almost three years Jesus Christ was revealed **to** Saul of Tarsus.

*“But **when it pleased God**, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, **To reveal his Son IN me**, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately **I conferred not with flesh and blood**: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then **after three years I went up to Jerusalem** to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.”* Galatians 1:15-18

The truth that “Jesus is the Christ” had been revealed **to** Saul in a moment of time when he was saved on the road to Damascus. The *“revelation of Jesus Christ”* was a complete revelation of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus in which he understood our salvation through *“crucifixion, burial, and resurrection with (in union with) Jesus Christ.”* There came a time, however, that it “pleased God” to reveal His Son **in** Saul as a qualification to preach Christ among the heathen. It must have been when he was *“caught up into paradise”* II Corinthians 12:3 that God revealed His Son **in** Saul. That

this event happened near the end of Saul's three year period of isolation, and before he entered public ministry, is incredible, and can be proven by the scripture. When writing of these things, Paul spoke of a three year period and a fourteen year period consecutively. When he told of being "*caught up into paradise,*" he said it happened "*...above fourteen years ago*" II Corinthians 12:2. This places his heavenly experience at the end of three years of solitude and just before he began his ministry as a teacher at Antioch. Certainly, this "heavenly experience" was the fulfilment of the words of Paul, "*...it pleased God...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen*" Galatians 1:15-16. If the "Son of God" was revealed *in* Saul of Tarsus, then the "*chief of sinners*" was "*saved by grace*" and transformed "*according to the eternal purpose*" Ephesians 3:11, as a "pattern" of what God will do for everyone who will believe the truth.

Saul of Tarsus: the "Pattern" of Grace

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." I Timothy 1:15-16

The Apostle Paul considered himself "*the chief of sinners*" because of his past record of persecution against the church. He said previously in this same text, "*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*" I Timothy 1:12-14.

Conclusion

The eternal purpose was first seen when God created man "*in His image, and after His likeness.*" When sin entered the heart and

nature of man through Adam's disobedience, the eternal purpose was "*hid in God*" Ephesians 3:9 from Adam until Jesus Christ. When Paul spoke to Timothy of the "holy calling" which we received in salvation, he said it was "*according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ...*" II Timothy 1:9-10. The term "*before the world began*" speaks of "*before the entrance of sin.*" What Adam had been before sin entered was never seen until the Son of God was born. Paul understood the "eternal purpose" and our "holy calling" to be what God created in Adam, and manifested in Jesus Christ. "*Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" II Thessalonians 2:14. This is the call to salvation as understood by the Apostle Paul, and defines the salvation which Christ purchased at Calvary for us who believe.

God's "eternal purpose" was manifested in the Apostle Paul, and possibly others of the original apostles. Our text for this message tells of the calling of Saul of Tarsus to **1.** "*...preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ...*" Ephesians 3:8 **2.** "*...to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery...*" verse 9 **3.** "*...to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God...*" verse 10 **4.** *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" Ephesians 3:11

Consider this man had been "*the chiefest of sinners*" until Christ saved him and set him forth "*as a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him (Jesus Christ) to life everlasting*" I Timothy 1:16. Man may seek to follow a spiritual example, but only God can follow the "pattern" of salvation. In other words, what God did in Saul of Tarsus to give us the great Apostle Paul is exactly what He has prepared for everyone who will "*believe the truth*" and "*trust in Christ.*" Not all of us are called to be apostles, but every child of God is called "*to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" II Thessalonians 2:14. We are "*called with a holy*

calling, not according to our works, but according to (equal to) His own purpose and grace...” II Timothy 1:9.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:1-2

Adam, created in the image and likeness of God, was God’s “eternal purpose” in the embryonic stage. God’s purpose for Adam and Eve was to *“be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth”* Genesis 1:28 with a people *“in the image and likeness of God.”* Adam, however, had not been tested. He failed to overcome when he and his wife were “tested” by the serpent. Sin entered into the world through Adam and Eve, and they filled the earth with sinners. With the entrance of sin, the “eternal purpose” was hidden to man, but very much a reality in Christ. When Christ came into the world as the Son of God, *“the eternal purpose”* was manifested in Jesus, the Christ. As Adam was tested and failed, Jesus was also tested and overcame. He offered His own body and blood to *“redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people...”* Titus 2:14. We who are “redeemed” are also “tested.” When John saw the “new Jerusalem” coming down from God, He heard these words, *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son”* Revelation 21:7. There will be no sin, no devil, no sickness, no pain or sorrow. The new earth will be filled with sons and daughters of God, in the image and likeness of the Son of God. This is the “eternal purpose” to which we are called.

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