

## Ephesians 1:9 -12 – The Mystery of His Will

**Ephesians 1:9-12** <sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him <sup>10</sup> 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. In Him <sup>11</sup> also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, <sup>12</sup> to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Last week we began to see how this grand plan of God was working itself out in history as God unfolds what His will is for mankind. The redemptive plan was first introduced to sinful man in the Garden of Eden when God gave a promise of judgment upon the seed of Satan and how a Savior would be born through the seed of the woman to deliver humanity from the penalty and power of sin.

From that time God had uncovered how He would do this and who this Savior would be. And as you follow the history of Israel in the Scriptures you can see how this plan was unfolded more and more. Part of the mystery had to do with delivering not only Israel but the whole world as well.

To the Jew of Paul's day that was a mystery. From the Jews' perspective they thought, how could these pagan Gentiles be allowed to share in the inheritance from God? And Paul addresses this later in this letter.

EPH 3:2-6 "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. <sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

You and I, who are not Jews, are also the recipients of this mystery found in Christ. And when we come to this portion of Scripture

we'll delve deeper into this truth. But this mystery was the result of the kind intention of God which He purposed in Christ as we saw in verse 9.

In other words, it pleased God to work His will out for our benefit. He didn't do this grudgingly. He was ecstatic that we should share in His eternity and have fellowship with Him. And He was pleased that His Son would become a man and die for the penalty of our sins to accomplish this.

But He would accomplish this according to His time schedule. This is what verse 10 tells us.

EPH 1:10 "to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

The NAS is a more literal translation at this point when it speaks of this will of God being fulfilled "with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times...".

What this means is that this administration of God concerning the fullness of times has to do with God being a steward of time.

You and I are called by God to be good stewards of our money. We must manage it well to the glory of God. We too, are also to be good stewards of our time. We must manage it in a way where we take care of our families and our jobs and the time we spend with our God.

In a similar way verse 10 speaks of how God is a good steward with the history of His creation, which includes man. He manages this world well, not only as it relates to people in general, but most importantly, how it relates to our salvation.

Sometimes we forget that God is responsible to make sure this world is managed properly. Just as you and I are given responsibility to manage our families, or to manage our jobs, or maybe people who are placed in our care at work, God also must manage the universe He created.

Since the fall of man, however, God's management takes into account the curse which effects this world because of sin. But even the curse is part of God's management. He was the one who placed it into effect. We saw this last week when the father of Noah clearly understood this.

GEN 5:28-29 "When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son.  
29 He named him Noah and said, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed."

This management of God is making sure the penalty of sin is being carried out, but also in light of this, He is making sure the cure to this sin problem has a reason for being carried out. If there was no sin, there would be no need for a Savior. In His management of this world, He assures us that the Messiah will come onto the scene at just the right time in history.

Often times we view our lives and what happens in our lives as coincidence. And yet what we see is that our great God is managing our lives in a way to assure that His will is being accomplished in our lives.

Did you ever wonder why you were born where you were?, or ask why you share in the privilege of growing up in a country like the United States, when you could just have easily have grown up in a country like Iran?

Listen to what Luke records for us in the book of Acts.

ACT 17:26-27 "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

You and I were born in the time we live and where we live because God is a good manager of this world and has determined even this for us. Is this a fatalistic truth? Of course not. We are all still responsible to carefully manage our lives, but to suggest that God cannot manage His creation is to rob Him of His glory and Sovereignty.

In His management or stewardship of this world He has determined when the Messiah would come into this world and where He would be born. Here in verse 10 it's called the fullness of times. According to God's perfect timing Jesus Christ came on to the scene.

This word fullness is an interesting one in the Greek. It can be understood as a nautical term. It's the Greek word pleroma, and it

can be understood to mean a ship, inasmuch as it is filled (i.e. manned) with sailors, rowers, and soldiers...

The idea here is that whatever it takes to fully man a ship so that its mission can be accomplished, God too, has fully brought all things together in time that are essential to fulfill His mission for mankind.

He spoke of this management or stewardship of redemption in places like DAN 9:24 "Seventy 'sevens' + Or 'weeks'; are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the holy One..."

He is saying, 'I've got it all under control. I am a wise and Sovereign manager who will most certainly accomplish My will in the earth, and you can trust Me in all that I do.'

His will was to redeem men. But it would not happen a moment sooner than when He determined it would happen.

GAL 4:4-5 "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

The apostle Peter also recognizes that God's plan for our Redeemer would happen in the perfect timing of God, which Peter describes as the last times; meaning the final chapters of God's will for humanity.

1PE 1:20-21 "He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."

This is what our text means when we read in EPH 1:10 "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 upon the earth."

All of human history, and for that matter angelic history, revolves around Jesus Christ. All things are summed up in Him. Everything in heaven and everything on earth, which includes the universe, are summed up in Christ and under His Lordship.

Remember what the risen Christ said to His disciples in MAT 28:18 ... "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Paul says later in this letter in EPH 1:22-23 "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

When writing to the Colossian church Paul said this.

COL 1:16-18 "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

This is why John wrote in REV 19:16 "On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

This is the God and Savior we serve through Christ. In the fullness of time Jesus Christ accomplished His will for men that they might be saved. And yet, the fullness of time includes that which is to come which Christ still has under control.

**Hebrews 2:7-8** <sup>7</sup> "YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; <sup>8</sup> YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

You see the fullness of times is still future in many respects. Our redemption in Christ came in time, the perfect time according to God's will. But our full redemption has not yet come about in time. But it will. You and I will one day receive our resurrected glorified bodies. One day you and I will stand before our God. We still live in the fullness of time in that God's will is still being worked out.

We have not yet been given the privilege to live on the new heavens and new earth after this present world will be destroyed by

fire. This will happen in time. All things will be summed up in Christ; things in heaven and on earth.

These are glorious times we live in. It may not appear that way because of all the wickedness we see in the earth, not unlike the wickedness recorded in Genesis in the days of Noah where God finally judged the earth with a flood, but it is glorious in the sense that God is managing His will in the earth as He is bringing all things to fruition in Christ.

Nothing is out of control. God is still on the throne. And He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Whether angels or men, God is still the One who rules over all things as we see in verse 10. And no one, not even Satan, can thwart God's will because even Satan comes under the management of God as Satan is used to carry out the Lords will, not unlike how the Pharaoh was used to carry out God's will in delivering the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt.

Don't ever think that Satan has the upper hand, because he doesn't. Yes, he is a powerful foe and yes he is given authority in the earth, but only to the degree as God allows it. Remember, greater is He who is in us, than he who is in the world. God is managing all things well, both in heaven and on earth.

Another aspect of His management or stewardship is how He has worked out redemption in our lives.

EPH 1:11-12 "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory."

A more literal translation would be, "in whom we also have been chosen to an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of the One working all things according to the counsel of His own will..." (ALTB)

The Greek language, in verse 11, can also give the sense that not only are we chosen to receive an inheritance, but it could refer to God giving Christ an inheritance, we being His inheritance.

ROM 8:17 "Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

Being a co-heir is sharing jointly with what another has inherited. Christ has inherited what the Father has given Him. Part of that inheritance is you and me.

JOH 6:37-39 "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."

This is why we see that for Jesus to go to the cross it was not something He despised, but He saw it as the very means for you and I to live with Him forever, and that's why it was a joy for Him to go to the cross for us.

We see this in the prophecies of the O.T.. David wrote of the Messiah in Psalm 16 and Peter quoted it on the day of Pentecost.

ACT 2:25-28 David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' (Psalm 16:8 -11)

This joy of our Lord is what the writer of Hebrews spoke of in HEB 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

What an awesome thing to think that the inheritance of Jesus Christ is you and me. Do you think He wants to take care of His inheritance? Do you think He has a vested interest in us to where He is going to make sure that of all that the Father gives Him He will lose none? You better believe it. This is why He protects us and watches over us as a Father who cares so much for His children.

But, when we talk about our inheritance part of it is sharing in the Body of Christ, who He purchased with His blood. It is the Body of Christ who will rule and reign with Jesus Christ. But just as we are in Christ, Christ is in us. We share in His nature, His life. And

so in that sense our inheritance is the Lord Jesus. We share jointly with our Lord all of the blessings which Jesus purchased for us on the cross and in His resurrection.

And though we have not fully realized all of these blessings, we know that in the fullness of time Christ will accomplish what He has set out to do even before the foundation of the world, and He does it for you and me in Christ. We have been given life today in Christ by faith. But there will be a day when faith gives way to reality.

1CO 13:12 "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

We will not need faith in the same way we do today when we see Jesus face to face, because we will have received the inheritance in full. It will not just be a proposition we receive by faith, which is a conviction of things not seen, as our writer of Hebrews puts it. We will receive the reality of it in full.

This is all part of the plan of God for you and me in Christ. He is moving us toward that day when Christ will be revealed fully in us.

ROM 8:18-25 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

We obtain it all by faith, but oh what a glorious day that will be when our hope is transformed into reality. This is what we wait patiently for. This is why we live by faith. This is why we continue to move forward for Christ because in the process of living in the Spirit, which is living in the power of this new life in



Christ, we get a chance to do what the angels in heaven are doing perfectly today.

What they are doing perfectly today is bringing glory to His name. All glory belongs to Him because He is the One who purposed to make known the mystery of His will which is to bring us into fellowship with Himself.

This is what Paul is saying in EPH 1:12 "in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory."

You and I today have the opportunity to be to the praise of His glory. If you've ever wanted to know why God saved you, this is a very important reason. You might say, why does God need us to bring glory to His name? He doesn't. And that's what makes this life in Christ all the more awesome.

We get to be used by God for all of eternity to demonstrate how He loved us before the foundation of the world. We get to be used for all eternity to show how merciful and loving and generous our great God is. We have the firstfruits of this life in Christ today.

ROM 8:23-24 "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved."

JAM 1:18 "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

He created us to bear fruit and show forth the new life we have in Christ, because it is this new life which we will take to heaven, and ultimately the new heavens and new earth, and which is the very life which enables us to bring glory to the One who loved so much that He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for us, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

We talk about being born again and saved and yet I wonder how we understand this truth. We are born again, or born from above because only in the new birth do we share in the new life which will never end as we spend it with our Savior. The alternative is to be separated from God forever suffering eternal punishment.

This world is not our home and neither is this world our hope. It would be a sorry state of affairs if it were. It's no wonder people

become discouraged and full of fear if they think this world is it. What does it have to offer; 70 or 80 years of life that gives you a prize at the end which is death?

Why would anyone want that? And yet even Christians hold on to this life tenaciously in a way that doesn't allow them to enjoy God and the life He's given us in Christ because they're too busy trying to cultivate fruit for this world to the exclusion of cultivating fruit to God's glory.

He purchased us to be with Him where He is and believe me it isn't ultimately this world. Our hope needs to be a living hope, where we live it out in this world with the new life we've been given in Christ. And next week we're going to see clearly how that is done.

God is accomplishing this in our lives today in the power of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us with the express purpose of keeping our eyes on the prize and the ability to run toward that prize who is Christ.

1PE 1:3-5 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."