

Session 2: God's Eternal Purpose

I. An Overview of God's Eternal Purpose

- a) Continuing in our effort of laying a foundation from which to build an eternal purpose church, in this session we will highlight several key principles about God's eternal purpose. As we begin our discussion on God's eternal purpose, please be aware that we have an entire class devoted to this crucial subject. So, here we are focused only on the parts of God's eternal purpose that have a direct impact on building an eternal purpose church so as to set the stage for what and why we must build something different. If you really want to build an eternal purpose church, it is really important that you thoroughly familiarize yourself with God's eternal plan, thought, and purpose that was established before the foundation of the world. As stated in the previous session, Paul's writings and our class, *God's Eternal Purpose*, will help. Therefore, in this session, I will summarize several key points on eternal purpose to emphasize those ideas that are the most important for building an eternal purpose church.

1. Let's begin our discussion of God's ultimate intent for His church with a glimpse of eternity.

- a) Paul wrote to the Corinthian church these familiar words,

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in *a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages* to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM" (1 Cor. 2:6-9).

- b) Even though when we think of eternity, "we see in a mirror dimly", we do know from the words above that wonderful things await God's fully prepared people. Therefore, drawing from some things we do know from the scriptures we can get a glimpse of eternity. So let's dream for a moment. In future ages, we see the Lord Jesus taking the eternal gospel of Christ as the way, truth, and life throughout the vastness of His creation. We know this will never end as there will be no end to the increase of His government. Throughout age after age, the Lord will expand His government in ways yet unknown to us (Isa. 9:7).
- c) At His side will be His eternal wife, the bride who in the church age paid the price to make herself ready. She will forever be at the Lord's side in an intimate partnership with her Bridegroom King. She will have been used in great authority at the end of the church age. In fact, she will have been instrumental through her intercession and Christlikeness to initiate end-time events and her being made ready will actually motivate the heavenly Father to send His Son for her as His prepared bride who has made herself ready.
- d) She will feast at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and will enjoy forever the greatest intimacy with her Bridegroom King. Christ will forever be her life, possessing her so that they will abide together in full union with the Father and Holy Spirit. She will be clothed in unimaginable glory as her preparation during her life has caused her to be resurrected in glory, glory compared to the brightness of the sun (1 Cor. 15:41-42).
- e) The prepared bride will eternally carry the voice from the throne throughout the creation. She will be Christ's chosen representative to the creation in her eternal nature as an exact representation of her

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King. She will be an eternal priest offering spiritual sacrifices to her Lord and representing her Bridegroom to the creation. The glory of this relationship will never end. It will only increase, and it will be like this forever and ever.

- f) I don't know about you, but I want to be a part of those things which eye has not seen and ear not heard. Now that we have your attention, let's explore God's eternal purpose.

2. God's eternal purpose was determined in a heavenly council of the Godhead before the foundation of the world.

- a) In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul takes us back before creation to before the foundation of the world. He takes us back before there was a throne, before the angelic order was created, before man or any created thing existed. Paul takes us back to when there was only the Godhead to an eternal council when God's eternal plan was determined.
- b) The council meeting to which I refer is recorded in Ephesians 1:11. It states, "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will..." (Eph. 1:11). We know that the purpose to which Paul refers in the above verse is God's *eternal* purpose based on Ephesians 3:11 which reads, "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord...".
- c) The eternal plan of God was determined by a heavenly council *before the foundation of the world*, "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:4). This plan was determined before creation, before the fall, before the need for salvation, before the covenants, and before any Jewish practices, and is independent of the fall or any of the redemptive covenants God made with man. Even if the fall had never occurred, God's eternal plan would be in essence as it is today. To make sure we are clear, God's redemptive plan through His covenants with man are absolutely necessary because of the fall. However, their purpose is to get us back to His eternal purpose and plan.
- d) God's plan and purpose was predestined before the foundation of the earth as this verses states, "He *predestined* us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph. 1:5). The Greek word translated *predestined* is *proorizoo*. Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words defines this word as to mark out beforehand, to determine before, or to foreordainⁱ. There has been much debate and confusion about predestination. Some think that God has predestined some to be saved and some to be lost. However, this is not what God predestined before the foundation of the world. What has been predestined is God's eternal purpose. It has been marked out beforehand. To say it in another way, God's eternal purpose has been predestined before the foundation of the world, not those who would experience it.
- e) You may have noticed that I wrote of a "council" and the previous passage refers to the "counsel". Let's clarify this important point. The English definition of council is: an advisory, deliberative, or legislative body of people formally constituted and meeting regularly.ⁱⁱ The English definition for counsel: is advice, especially that given formally.ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, just looking at the English definitions, you would think that the Lord is merely offering advice. However, as we look at the Greek word for counsel used in this verse, we get a different picture. The word translated "counsel" in Ephesians 1:11 is the Greek word *boule*. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* defines *boule* as something that is the result of a determination in contrast to counsel that is given as advice. Counsel as advice would be conveyed by a different Greek word.^{iv} According to *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, *boule* when used outside the New Testament conveyed the idea of the result of a process

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of deliberation in which something was determined.^v We see also in Jeremiah of the existence of God's heavenly councils in which eternal issues were determined. Consider Jeremiah 23:18-22, which states, "But who has stood in the *council* of the LORD, that he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?...But if they had stood in My council, then they would have announced My words to My people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds." Therefore, we can correctly state that the counsel of God's will was determined by deliberation of the Godhead in a heavenly council in which God's eternal plan was decided.

- f) Thus, before the foundation of the world, God in a council of the Godhead established His eternal purpose and plan in which man has been included.

3. God's eternal purpose encompasses a plan determined for the eternal ages.

- a) Once again, I refer to Ephesians 3:11 which reads, "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord...". In context, Paul is saying that he is called to bring to light the mystery of Christ which has been hidden but at that time was being revealed. In saying this, he makes the point that the revelation of the mystery of Christ was in accordance with God's eternal purpose. In addition to Paul's main point, this verse conveys two critical truths for our discussion. First, the literal translation of "eternal purpose" in this verse is "the purpose of the ages".^{vi} Second, Paul writes that the purpose of the ages has been, is being, and will be carried out in Christ.
- b) We will speak about Christ's role in God's eternal purpose in a moment. But for now, the point is that before the foundation of the world, God established an eternal plan and purpose for the ages—ages plural. There will be no end to the ages to come and even though we do not know what they will be or look like, we know that they have been determined even before there was a creation and that Christ will be the agent of God's work throughout the infinite ages that are before us.

II. Components of God's Eternal Purpose and Plan

- a) In this section, we will address nine different components of God's eternal purpose, focusing primarily on issues important for building and eternal purpose church.

1. God's eternal purpose includes a many membered family to live eternally in full union with the Godhead.

- a) Once again drawing from Ephesians, we observe that in the heart of God before the foundation of the world was a many membered family. Paul writes, "When I think of the wisdom and scope of his plan, I fall down on my knees and pray to the Father of all the great family of God—some of them already in heaven and some down here on earth" (Eph. 3:14-15, TLB).
- b) Even though fully content in the deep love relationship among the triune Godhead, God desired for His good pleasure (Eph. 1:5, 9) a family of mature sons for Himself (Eph. 1:5) and a bride/body for His Son (Eph. 1:4, 5:25-33) to dwell together in a temple for the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:10, Rev. 21:2). You might wonder how we arrived at the bride for the Son as part of God's eternal purpose. The reason is that Chapter 5 of Ephesians (the book about eternal purpose) tells us that at the end of the church age, the glorious bride will be presented to Christ. In addition, the phrase "holy and blameless" is used to describe the fulfillment of God's predestined plan for the bride (Eph. 1:4). The same phrase is used to describe the bride (Eph. 5:27).

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- c) In God's eternal thought was a family in which the Father would have a multitude of sons who were an exact representation of His beloved Son (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29). The Son would have a bride who would be in full union with His life, would embody His nature and likeness, and would love Him with the same passion and pleasure of the Father (Rev. 19:7-9; Jn. 17:26). The Holy Spirit would have a temple in which the bride/sons would dwell in fullness (1 Cor. 6:19).
- d) This vast family of fully mature sons for the Father and an equally yoked bride in full union with the Son was intended from the beginning to share God's life, nature, spirit, vision, purpose, and dedication. God's intent was from the beginning for His creation to love the Son with the same passion as the Father loves the Son (Jn. 17:26), and to partner with Christ throughout the ages forever in an ever increasing way.

2. God's eternal purpose is rooted in the good pleasure of the Father rather than in the needs and desires of man.

- a) In reference to God moving to unveil and fulfill His eternal purpose, two places in the first chapter of Ephesians employs the phrase "according to the kind intention of His will" in the translation of the Bible I use. A cursory reading of this chapter suggests that God is doing these things in His kindness motivated by the pleasure and needs of man. This phrase is better translated "according to His good pleasure". Whereas God is kind, wants the best for all of us, blesses us immensely in this life, and His eternal purpose is an almost unimaginable blessing to us--His eternal purpose is primarily motivated by the good pleasure of the Godhead. We will delve into this much more in a later session, but for now know that the driving force behind the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose is the good pleasure of the Godhead, not on the needs of man.
- b) Because of the fall, the vast majority of the church has assumed that God's purpose is rooted in the needs of man rather than in the good pleasure of God. Because of the fall, most think of God's purpose as centered around man receiving salvation, around the progressive restoration of the culture, or the redemptive covenants that God made with man to bring restoration to mankind. Even though because of the fall, these things are very necessary, they are not God's eternal purpose. Rather they are part of God's redemptive plan to restore man back to God's eternal purpose. Without God's redemptive plan, no one would be allowed to have a relationship with the Lord, inherit heaven, or experience the great blessings that a relationship with the Lord offers.
- c) However, because of the very necessary redemptive nature of the scriptures, most people believe that God's eternal purpose is centered on man's need rather than God's pleasure. While most believe this, it is not the truth. God's eternal purpose is rooted not in man but in the Father heart of God.
- d) In eternity past when there was no creation, no heaven, no throne, and no created being of any sort, the heavenly Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit lived in an intimate union characterized by a passionate love relationship. In the heart of the Father was the desire for a large family to share in the intimate love relationship of the Godhead. God desired a family of sons who would be like the Son in nature and character, a bride for His Son, and a temple in which they could all dwell for the Holy Spirit.
- e) Thus, eternal purpose is centered in the heart of the Father for His beloved Son and for a family for Himself and the other members of the Godhead. Therefore, God's Fatherhood is the controlling and ultimate factor which determines His eternal purpose and plan for man, not man's need due to the fall. I will use my family as an illustration. My wife and I have four adult sons. As they were growing up, out of my love for them, I wanted them to have a loving relationship with my wife and I and to

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grow up to love and serve God. That was my purpose for them above any other purpose. Within that purpose, I wanted them blessed. I wanted them to have good things, to live in health, to have joy and happiness, but my purpose was a family who loved God and my wife and I. This is God's purpose too. He does want good things for us, but His eternal purpose is rooted in His having a family in union with Him.

- f) This distinction changes everything. Rather than God's purpose being about salvation of man, restoring what was lost due to the fall, or providing us with money and happiness, God's purpose is rooted in the desire of the heavenly Father for a family of likeminded sons who will also become a wife for His Son—whether the fall would have happened or not—and to abide in this relationship forever.
- g) Note the following quote from DeVern Fromke in his wonderful book, *Ultimate Intention*,

But let us remember, the eternal Son and His Body of rectified sons are destined to live for one thing—the most complete and supreme honor, glory, pleasure, and satisfaction which they can bring to the heavenly Father. So while the Father is concerned for His Son, the Son is also concerned for the Father...This is the divine rule that governs all heaven. It is His intention that all His sons shall be invited to embrace this divine purpose and philosophy of life.^{vii}
- h) Rather than man being the center of God's plan, man is invited into God's heavenly Father centered eternal plan so as to fulfill the eternal desire of the Godhead.

3. God's eternal purpose is to be established in, through, and for His Son.

- a) Colossians 1:16 reads, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created *through Him* and *for Him*." Certainly as we indicated in the last session, eternal purpose was on Paul's mind when he wrote these words. Therefore, He is saying that all things including God's eternal purpose are in, through, and for Christ.
- b) Reading again Ephesians 3:11 this time to emphasize the italicized phrase, "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out *in Christ Jesus* our Lord". It was determined at the eternal council that Christ would be the center of all things with all things summed up *in Him* (Eph. 1:10). Christ would be pre-eminent, the firstborn of creation in terms of authority (Col. 1:15) and in terms of order as the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18). God's eternal purpose is above all about Christ. God's eternal purpose is to exalt Christ as pre-eminent and supreme.
- c) It was determined further that Christ would eternally be the way, the truth, and the life and that all true life would be in, through, and for Him. It was determined that Christ would be the life and He would impart His life into a creation of men and women who would be filled with His life, leading to full union with the life of His Son. It was determined that Christ would become the pattern to which men and women would be conformed into an exact representation of Christ (Rom. 8:29).
- d) It was determined that throughout the ages, Christ would express His life through a people who have surrendered their soul life to his life so as to be possessed in fullness by Him.
- e) The eternal plan, again established before the foundation of the world, was to place the life of Christ in a people in fullness. As we will see in a moment even if there had been no fall, man would still have had to be transformed into the image of Christ. From eternity past, it was determined that man would be invited to take on the nature and character of Christ in fullness by progressively partaking of Christ

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so that man might become a vessel for the life of Christ to be expressed to God's creation forever in an ever increasing way.

- f) As such, God's eternal plan was for man to lay down his self-life so that the life of Christ could come forth in fullness in His creation and thereby making all things in, through, and for Him.

4. In God's eternal purpose, God's people are invited into an intimate union with the Godhead.

- a) It will be very exciting to be used in partnership with Christ and as His eternal representative throughout the creation. This will be an unbelievable blessing. However, far greater than this is that God's eternal purpose includes the invitation for believers to an intimate relationship with the Lord forever!
- b) There are many scriptural references to support an eternally intimate relationship with the Lord. For example, Christ's message to the church at Laodicea promises that the one who overcomes lukewarmness will sit with Christ on His throne. Sitting on a throne sounds great, but even much greater is sitting with Him. Many of Christ's messages to the seven churches recorded in Revelation speak of eternal intimacy as well.
- c) Our Lifeschool class, *God's Eternal Purpose*, identifies three major categories of eternal rewards: eternal authority, eternal glory, and eternal intimacy. There is a lot more information to support eternal intimacy scripturally there. For now, know that God in His desire for a family includes the unfathomable promise for the believer to live in intimacy with the Godhead and to do so forever.
- d) As we enjoy God now by drawing close to Him in spiritual intimacy, we will not only experience the joy of a close, personal relationship with the Lord. We will also be positioning ourselves for eternal intimacy with the Godhead—the greatest blessing of all!

5. In God's eternal purpose and plan, the cross life was determined as the way.

- a) In God's eternal purpose, the *cross life* was established as an eternal principle. The same result that is produced by denying yourself, taking up your cross daily, and following Christ (Lk. 9:23), that is, embracing the cross life would have been required even if the fall had not occurred. This is an important point for our class. Even though the cross event may have only been necessary because of the fall, *the principle of the cross life* is an eternal principle established as part of God's eternal plan before the foundation of the world and before and independent of the fall.
- b) We first observe this principle in action in the Godhead in eternity past. The principle of surrender was in the heart of God even before creation or before sin entered the world. No member of the Godhead lives for themselves. The Father does all with the Son in view so that the Son might have pre-eminence. In turn, the Son lives to reveal and bring glory to the Father. The Holy Spirit dedicates His activity to reveal the Son and to bring about the eternal purpose of the Father. We see surrender also in the life of Christ. His decision to leave heaven to come to earth and in fact, His entire life was an act of surrender to the will of the Godhead. Therefore, the principle of the cross life is an eternal principle whether the fall had occurred or not.
- c) Another example revolves around the two trees in the garden: the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. When God created Adam before the fall, He created Him as a living soul (Gen. 2:7). In contrast, Jesus the second Adam was a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Just like the major theme which runs through the Apostle Paul's writings to reckon oneself dead to the flesh in order for one to

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be transformed from a soulish person into to a spiritual one in which the life of Christ manifests through him, the two trees in the garden were for the same purpose. If Adam had eaten from the tree of life and denied eating from the tree of knowledge of evil (sin) or good (self), he would have been transformed over time into the image of Christ. Had the fall not occurred, man would have been transformed by avoiding eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil but instead by eating of the tree of life. By living this way, man would have gradually been transformed into the image of Christ who is life and thereby take on the life of Christ.

- d) This principle is summarized very effectively by DeVern Fromke,

Had Adam obeyed God and thus been enlightened to see the value of the tree of life, he could have entered into sonship. Then by a constant eating of this tree (which represented Christ) he could have moved along the highway of realizing God's ultimate intention. Now in spite of Adam's fall, God has made the provision for Christ to become the continuing tree of life.^{viii}

- e) The nature of the Lamb is also an eternal principle. First Peter 1:19-20 reads, "...but with precious blood, *as of a lamb* unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (1 Peter 1:19-21). Christ has forever been and will forever be the Lamb which signifies surrender, sacrifice, death to self, etc.
- f) Our conclusion is that the principle of the cross is an eternal principle that is part of God's eternal plan regardless of whether the fall had occurred or not. This is a very important point to recognize because the majority of the church today has abandoned the idea of the crucified life for a believer. The church has replaced the inwrought cross with psychology, power, gifts, and pursuit of blessings. As a result, the church is far, far removed from being an expression of Christ in the earth—which is God's original intent for mankind. It is also an important point for those wanting to build an eternal purpose driven church. We must make the embrace of the cross life a central focus of our church's message so that people entrusted to our leadership can come into full union with Christ and become His eternal partner in fullness.

6. Man is intended to be Christ's inheritance and Christ is to be man's inheritance.

- a) The first chapter of Ephesians identifies two aspects of inheritance. Ephesians 1:18 speaks of Christ's inheritance in the saints, and Ephesians 1:14 speaks of our inheritance in Christ. In terms of eternal inheritance, these are two aspects of the same inheritance. The eternal plan of God is for Christ to have as *His inheritance* of an equally yoked bride in full union with Him, fully possessed by God, and exhibiting His nature and character as an exact representation of Himself.
- b) First and foremost, eternal inheritance is about the triune Godhead receiving their inheritance. While we are promised an inheritance too which comes in fullness as we become God's inheritance in fullness, the ultimate eternal purpose is for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to receive their eternal inheritance of full grown sons for the Father, a wife for the Son who has taken on His character and exhibits His life in fullness to live as one in the new Jerusalem as an abode of the Holy Spirit.
- c) From there, Christ and His bride will become eternal partners who will carry out God's eternal purpose forever in an ever-increasing way throughout God's creation. Thus, inheritance is primarily and ultimately about God receiving His inheritance in the saints.
- d) However, we too have an inheritance. Our inheritance of which the Holy Spirit is a down payment includes the things we often associate with it—things like salvation, blessings of Abraham, healing,

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freedom and prosperity. Moreover and more importantly, our eternal inheritance is that we have been invited into the inheritance of the Godhead. In other words, when God gets His full inheritance in us, we get our full inheritance in Him. Our inheritance is not just heaven, it is Christ in fullness.

- e) The fullness of our inheritance is that we are invited into the full union with God, into an intimate relationship with Him, to sit with Him on His throne, and to be His eternal voice and representative forever. He is our inheritance and out of relationship with Him, we are to be His eternal ambassador as He expands the increase of His government throughout age after age. There will be no end to the increase of His government and our inheritance is to be a part of this unimaginable blessing.
- f) As we discover God's eternal purpose, we quickly observe that it is not as much about us as it is about God. His purpose and the associated inheritance is much more about Christ receiving the reward of His suffering than it is about us getting what we want. For sure, when He receives His inheritance in us to the maximum degree, we receive our inheritance to the utmost too. But it is not about us. God's eternal purpose does not center around man but around God—about God getting what He wants.
- g) When our spiritual eyes are opened to see inheritance from the Father heart of God, it changes everything. Man is no longer the center, Christ becomes the purpose, focus, and center of all things. All things are for, in, through, and to Him.

7. As we approach the end of the age, the prepared bride will be used in unprecedented ways to transition the earth and God's people into the age to come.

- a) God's eternal plan was for everyone who ever lived to enter into His purpose and life. However, the fall negated that reality. Even so, it is still God's desire that as many as possible would come into the fullness He so desires for His people. Throughout history God has had His remnant reach out to the creation to invite them into His eternal plan. As we approach the end of the age, this effort will intensify. God's sovereign hand will release a move of God that will be unprecedented in history. Many call this the end-time harvest. Some call it the second Pentecost. As this comes upon the earth, the remnant will grow and God will have multitudes of people enter into His eternal purpose and plan. His remnant church who has insight into these things will be used in mighty ways as we approach the second coming of the Lord and this generation has an opportunity to be the generation of His coming.
- b) Those who allow Christ to fill them to fullness *now* as was determined in God's eternal plan will be used greatly in the end times. Many of our Lifeschool classes focus on a variety of end-time events and we will not attempt to go into detail here of all that will occur and every way God's remnant might be used in these events. But there is an unprecedented work of God that has been ordained for the end times.
- c) The prepared remnant who has insight and has been conformed to Christ's death will become end-time messengers as faithful witnesses of truth to hold up a standard of righteousness in the midst of an immoral anti-christ culture and a compromising church and be used to turn hearts of people back to the Lord and to a lifestyle of righteousness. They will proclaim truth whether people want to hear it or not.
- d) This same remnant will then build a wineskin that God can use to pour out His glory that will come in the end times. At this point in history, no movement in the church globally is ready for the end-time issues that are coming—both the good or the bad. God is raising up people with insight to help others

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so that we all can build wineskins whether it is our individual heart or our church or a group of churches to be ready for the Lord's return.

- e) The end-time bride will also participate in a level and manner of intercession not yet happening on a large scale in the earth. Based on the intercession recorded in Revelation 5 and 8, God's prepared people who have taken on the nature of Christ will move in great authority in their prayer that will ascend to God's throne and activate end-time events and help facilitate God's eternal purpose. In fact, based on Revelation 12, these same people will be used of God to activate an angelic war between God's host of angels and the dragon thus activating the end of the age.
- f) Finally, the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose for this age will actually be the act that will facilitate the transition to the age to come. When the man-child emerges in fullness the great tribulation will begin and when the bride has made herself ready, the Lord will come. When Christ has filled the hearts and lives of His bride in full number, His coming will be activated. In other words, when God's remnant has made herself ready as God's eternal plan so dictated, the purpose of this age will have been completed and the transition to the age to come will commence. No matter how dark it gets in the earth and no matter how much evil arises, the Lord will not come back until the bride has made herself ready—why because there is an eternal plan for this age and it must be fulfilled before God moves to the next age—the Millennial reign of Christ in the earth.
- g) Here is another good quote from DeVern Fromke,

God is now doing a very special thing in those of His people who are pressing on with Him with marked purposefulness. There is a sweeping and terrible battle raging for the throne of this world...God's sons are being prepared and called to take the kingdom now, in a spiritual way, in order that they may share the throne in the age to come...Satan understands that he will be immediately deposed when the corporate Sonship comes into full manifestation, for then he will lose his position and hold. The issue which was settled at Calvary will be finally and forever enforced...As soon as the corporate Sonship is manifested in glory—as soon as he collectively stands on his feet and is united in every respect with the Head—the enemy will be cast down from the heavenlies, and will wage war in awful fury in the earth.^{ix}

- h) The battle will rage for 3 and ½ years, but Christ and His prepared army will be victorious. Christ will return in glory and reign for one thousand years from His throne in Jerusalem. In this unprecedented period and in the days leading to it, God's prepared remnant who have radically pursued God's eternal purpose in character and action will be used mightily as God's end-time messengers, intercessors, and master builders.

8. God's eternal purpose carries with it a purpose for every age throughout eternity.

- a) Isaiah wrote these famous words prophesying about the government of Christ, "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" (Isa. 9:7). As Isaiah wrote, there will no end to the increase of His government...forevermore! This brief statement virtually impossible to comprehend is packed with life transforming meaning.
- b) First, there will be no end to God's rule over and throughout His creation. His creation is vast. The furthest known universe is about 13.3 billion light years from earth. That is a long way, and as the scriptures tell us there will be no end to the increase of His government. I am not sure what that means to be honest; however, two things I do know from this verse is that Christ's rule and reign will never end and it will always be expanding, and this will take place forever, never to end. In His ever

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expanding work, His prepared bride is to be at His side and to be His eternal representative in His eternal work--forever.

- c) Heaven will not be a place where we are to sit on a cloud and play a harp for eternity. The scriptures tell us that there will be ages upon ages. We know very little about coming ages at this point. We do know of the church age, the Millennial Kingdom age and a brief glimpse of the new Jerusalem descending to the earth with a new heaven and earth. Following these, there will be an infinite number of ages to follow.
- d) In the eternal council of the Lord before the foundation of the world, God determined the plan for every age. In His eternal purpose and plan at least two things will be accomplished. First, there will be a greater revelation of the Person of Christ in every age, and second, there will be a different work of and through Christ in His creation.
- e) Thus, each age carries with it a different specific purpose all of which were determined before the foundation of the world. Please note this: *the primary purpose of the church age is to prepare a people for the Lord*. It is to prepare a people as mature sons for the Father and as an equally yoked bride for the Son to live in the temple for the Holy Spirit. That is the purpose of this age, not to get rich, or to walk in health, or to have our own kingdom ministry. It is not to take dominion over the seven mountains of culture or to restore Jewish practices. It is not to get us from one week to another through the counsel and wisdom of man—it is to prepare a bride who can live in full union with Christ in passionate love, radical pursuit, full nature and character so as to be equally yoked with Christ. That is the primary purpose of this age.
- f) At the end of this age and throughout the next age, God's eternal purpose is to use the prepared bride in partnership with the Lord to take dominion over the earth. Called the Millennial Kingdom reign of Christ, God's purpose is to subdue it under Christ's Lordship and eventually present the earth to the heavenly Father.
- g) Other ages will have different purposes of which we do not yet have revelation. Even so, we know that our assignment now in accordance with the eternal purpose of this age is to draw near to Christ and to take on the nature and character of Christ in fullness so that His life can come through us so as to be made ready for the ages to come.

9. The Holy Spirit moves in this and every age in accordance with God's eternal purpose.

- a) Once again let's return to Ephesians 1. Paul wrote, "...also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose *who works all things after the counsel of His will...*" (Eph. 1:11). The point for here is highlighted by the italicized words *who works all things after the counsel of His will*. The Holy Spirit who has been given as a pledge of our receiving our inheritance is moving in the life of believers, but not doing anything and everything. He is working all things after the eternal purpose of the Father for our life that was determined in the eternal council before the foundation of the world.
- b) The Holy Spirit is not random. He is not leading one ministry in one way and another in a different way. While that might be true in terms of the messages to be taught in a specific season, the portion of the Great Commission that a church is to focus on or the specific mission field a church or individual is to pursue, and things like these, the overall work of the Holy Spirit is working out individual lives in accordance with the eternal purpose of God.

Session 2: God's Eternal Purpose

- c) Let me quote Fromke one more time,

Looking out from His Father-heart, we now have the ultimate yardstick by which we can measure things which fulfill or fall short of the Father's intention. Everything that harmonizes with this has His approval. Whatever is in alignment with the corporate Body as the expression of Christ, with the pre-eminent Headship of Christ, and with the total centrality of Christ, is the Father's great measure and pleasure.^x

- d) Much of what is happening in the church right now globally is totally separate from God's eternal purpose. Very few churches are currently focused on making a people ready for the Lord by empowering them to be conformed to the image of Christ in fullness. Many focus on just providing a blessing for people, others offer psychological messages to make their soul feel better, and others make people feel comfortable in their sin, and still others are focused totally on sharing the gospel of salvation with others.
- e) However, based on the eternal purpose of the Godhead determined before the world began, the Holy Spirit is about the task of leading people into that purpose and only that purpose. Like I said, different people will be at different places in that journey so the teaching topics will vary from church to church at varying times and seasons—but the primary goal, activity, messages, and programs of the church are to be focused on fulfilling God's eternal purpose in a people.

Conclusion

- a) Paul called on the church of his day to focus on God's eternal purpose and to let every other pursuit fall away. To the Philippians, he wrote, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, *intent on one purpose*" (Phil. 2:2), telling them to be focused or intent on one purpose which is God's eternal purpose. To the Ephesians, he wrote,

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:1-6).

- b) Paul's message to the Ephesian church was to walk in a manner of the calling of the eternal purpose God has for His people stating that there is only one calling to which we all must pursue. In both instances, Paul is saying to the church, be intent on pursuing God's eternal purpose and lay down anything and everything that would hinder that pursuit.
- c) As those who are called to build an eternal purpose driven church, may we heed Paul's exhortation and build our lives and ministries around God's eternal plan, purpose, and thought, focusing our energy on His plans and not on anything and everything but His eternal purpose for His people.

ⁱ Predestined, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers

ⁱⁱ Council, *Oxford Online Dictionary* through Microsoft Word, 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Counsel, *Oxford Online Dictionary* through Microsoft Word, 2016.

^{iv} Counsel, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers

^v Gerhard Kittle, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 1985) p. 108.

^{vi} F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistles to the Colossians to Philemon and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI; William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), p. 322.

^{vii} DeVern Fromke, *Ultimate Intention* (Indianapolis; Sure Foundation Publishers, 1998), P.45.

^{viii} *Ibid*, p. 83.

^{ix} *Ibid*, pp. 155-6.

^x *Ibid*, p. 45.