



# Foundations of

# FAITH

## The Eternal Purpose of God

### Lesson 9

Did you ever wonder whether God has a purpose in dealing with man? Reason tells us that He does, although reason itself does not reveal what this purpose is. We know that there is order in the natural world. This is seen in the perfect balance that exists in nature, in the exact movement of the celestial bodies, and in the marvellous reproductive systems in the plant and animal kingdoms. These things imply intelligence. Intelligence, in turn, implies purpose when it expresses itself in an orderly manner. From such considerations it would appear that the supreme being who created us would also have a purpose in dealing with man, the highest form of his creation.

The Bible tells us that this logic is correct. But it also informs us that this plan was a mystery to man until it was revealed in Christ. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (I Cor. 2:7-8) Paul further informs us that this mystery was "from the beginning of the world ... hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:9) Because this mystery of God's purpose could not be discovered by man without divine aid, it was necessary for God to reveal it to him. Thus we read of the things of God's wisdom. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." (I Cor. 2:10) Since the Holy Spirit of God has inspired the Old and New Testaments, the only way to discover this purpose is by going to the Bible.

#### **GOD'S PURPOSE IS SUMMED UP IN CHRIST.**

Paul states in Ephesians 1:10 "That in the dispensation

of the fullness of times he (God) might gather together in one (sum up - A.S.V.) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." This being true he speaks in Ephesians 3:11 of "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Therefore all things in the Bible point toward Jesus Christ, although this fact was not clear before he came to earth.

**GOD'S PURPOSE CONCEALED.** In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. He placed the first man in the Garden of Eden and gave him everything that he might desire. Had Adam and Eve not transgressed the law of God in eating of the forbidden fruit they might have expected never to have died. But "the wages of sin is death," (Romans 6:23) and the man was cast out of the garden, separated from God in spiritual death, destined to die physically as would all his posterity. Since then, all who have reached the age of accountability, at which they are able to distinguish between right and wrong, have sinned. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Only Jesus Christ was able to live a perfect life without sin.

Immediately after Adam's sin we have the first indication of God's purpose to redeem man from sin. It is found in God's promise as Adam and Eve were driven from the garden. "And I will put enmity between thee (the serpent or devil) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) Seed here refers to children and it appears that this is a prediction that Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, would overcome the devil and his children in dying on

the cross to conquer the sin brought into the world by Satan; and that, on the other hand, the heel of Christ would be bruised when his death would be caused by the forces of evil. Of course this was probably not clear to the first man and woman as this was but the first faint glimpse of the eternal purpose of God in saving man from sin.

We read little concerning God's purpose for the next 2000 years. The next statement of any consequence is the promise that God made to Abraham who became the father of God's chosen people, the Jews. Jehovah God told him, "And in you shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3) Later he repeated this promise by saying, "And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." (Gen. 22:18) This was a reference to the fact that Jesus Christ, by whom God purposed to save the world, would be a descendant of Abraham and that through him all mankind would be spiritually blessed. The promise to Abraham was later repeated to his son Isaac (Gen. 26:4) but still the exact nature of God's eternal purpose was not revealed.

Several hundred years later the descendants of Abraham by his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob (or Israel) had so increased that they constituted a great nation. By the hand of God they were delivered from the land of Egypt in which they had been made slaves and for forty years these people wandered in the wilderness under the guidance of Moses. The world was not yet ready for the coming of Christ so as a temporary measure God gave to these children of Israel a law which was to govern their actions, and a sacrificial system which served to prepare man for the coming of the son of God. The law, known as the Law of Moses, is found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Under the religious system which God set up, animal sacrifices were offered for the sins of the people. They served as a "remembrance of sins" (Heb. 10:3) until a perfect sin offering was given to the world in the person of Christ. The temporary nature of the law is shown in Galatians 3:24-25. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

God also gave the children of Israel a promise of better things to come and showed a little more clearly how his eternal purpose was to be carried out. Moses promised them on behalf of God, "The Lord thy God

will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of you, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him you shall listen." (Deut. 18:15) The prophet, of course, was Jesus Christ. He was like Moses in that as Moses had saved the people from physical destruction in Egypt, so Christ would save all mankind from spiritual death.

In the centuries which followed God often spoke to the children of Israel by the prophets. Many prophecies foretold the coming of the Messiah, or Christ, and made it a little clearer how the intent of God was to be revealed. But the exact nature of this eternal purpose was still concealed and the Jews mistakenly concluded from the prophecies that the Messiah would establish a temporal kingdom and reign in Jerusalem. It is easy for us to see how wrong they were in not recognising the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God, but we must remember that to them the wisdom of God in saving man from sin was still largely a mystery.

**GOD'S PURPOSE REVEALED.** Finally the time arrived at which God had chosen to reveal his eternal purpose to man. "But when the **fullness of the time** was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." (Gal. 4:4) For a little over thirty years Jesus Christ, the son of God, lived on earth teaching man a new way of life. He states his mission by saying, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) Because of his great love for man, God was "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9) Therefore we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16-17)

To that end Jesus died on Calvary's cross. In the shedding of his blood, salvation from sin for all men was made possible as stated by Paul, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7) All men may avail themselves of this atoning sacrifice when through faith in Christ they render obedience to him by repenting and being baptised in order that they might receive the remission of sins. (See Acts 2:38)

The death of Christ also showed the purpose of God in uniting the Jews and the Gentiles. In Ephesians 3:3 Paul speaks of the "mystery" that God had revealed to him. In the same sentence he tells us what

this mystery was, namely, “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. (Eph. 3:6) He informs us that this mystery “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.” (Eph. 3:5) Thus the ones who were selected to reveal that the Jews and Gentiles were one in Christ were the apostles and prophets, not just the apostle Paul, and this revelation they made by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul then continues, “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: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3:9-11) Then this mystery – that the Jews and Gentiles

were united as one in Christ – was a part of God’s eternal purpose, accomplished by the death of Christ and first revealed by the apostles.

**GOD’S PURPOSE AND THE CHURCH.** You will note in the preceding passage that the manifold wisdom of God has been made known by the church, in accord with God’s eternal purpose. Since the church is the “called-out” body composed of those people who have been separated from the world of sin, it is the visible expression of God’s wisdom and purpose in (1) redeeming man from the curse of sin, and (2) uniting Jews and Gentiles in one body.

Furthermore, this also shows that the church is not an afterthought of God, but that it is part of his eternal purpose. Nor is it a temporary expedient intended to prepare man for the establishment of a temporal kingdom. Rather, it is the body in which the heavenly father culminates his divine purpose in uniting man and redeeming him from sin.

#### TEST ON LESSON 9

Write **true** or **false** after the following statements:

1. The wages of sin is eternal life. ....
2. The first indication of God’s eternal purpose is found in the book of Exodus. ....
3. God promised Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed in his seed. ....
4. That promise to Abraham referred to Christ. ....
5. The promise was later repeated to Esau. ....
6. The Law of Moses was intended to be permanent. ....
7. After Moses, God never again foretold the coming of the Messiah. ....
8. The Jews expected the Messiah to establish a temporal kingdom. ....

**Underline the phrase that correctly completes each of the following statements:**

1. Christ came primarily to: (a) establish a kingdom in Jerusalem; (b) heal the physically sick; (c) seek and save that which was lost.
2. God desires to save: (a) the rich only; (b) all men; (c) the Gentiles only.

3. Therefore we may be redeemed by: (a) good deeds; (b) the blood of Christ; (c) money.
4. The believing alien sinner may avail himself of this salvation by: (a) being confirmed; (b) repenting and being baptised; (c) repenting and praying.
5. In Christ the relationship between Jews and Gentiles has been changed so that they are now: (a) united; (b) segregated; (c) divided.
6. The apostles and prophets had the “mystery” revealed to them by: (a) angels; (b) Paul; (c) the Spirit.
7. The mystery was: (a) part of God’s eternal purpose; (b) an afterthought; (c) a temporary expedient.
8. The church is: (a) a temporary expedient; (b) a part of God’s eternal purpose; (c) an afterthought.

**Read Ephesians 3:1-11 and Ephesians 1:3-10. Fill in the blanks after the following questions:**

1. How did Paul learn the mystery? .....
2. To whom did the Spirit reveal this mystery? .....
3. What people were to be fellow heirs and of the same body with the Jews? .....
4. In whom was the mystery hidden from the beginning of the world? .....
5. By what has the manifold wisdom of God been made known to principalities and powers? .....
6. In whom did God express his eternal purpose? .....
7. Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ? .....
8. Through whose blood do we have redemption? .....
9. In whom has God gathered together in one all things? .....

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## Lesson 9

### Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

Section 1 – F, F, T, T, F, F, F, T.

- Section 2 –
1. (c)
  2. (b)
  3. (b)
  4. (b)
  5. (a)
  6. (c)
  7. (a)
  8. (b)

- Section 3 –
1. By revelation
  2. Apostles and Prophets
  3. Gentiles
  4. God
  5. The Church
  6. Christ
  7. God
  8. Christ's
  9. Christ.

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