

A Series on Ephesians: Spiritual Blessings
He Made Known the Mystery (Ephesians 1:9-14)
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I. Spiritual Blessings

Good morning! Welcome to New City!

We are in the middle of a series on Ephesians, and a series within a series called “Spiritual Blessings.”

We’ve been looking at these spiritual blessings, the deep impacts, Christ has been in our lives so that our lives can be like Paul—praising God even in midst of suffering.

He has blessed us with the gift of being chosen by God, being adopted as children, being redeemed, and being sealed with the Holy Spirit.

But, the best is yet to come! The blessings of God are not for the present only, it is for the future as well. Wait until you see what the Lord has prepared for us!

When I was growing up, people talked about believing in God in order to go to heaven. Now, that’s not in vogue anymore. People don’t really talk about heaven as much. They talk about how a relationship with God is awesome in the present. And it is. But, if we don’t understand what is coming, we are missing out on a great anchor for our lives now.

Let’s read Ephesians 1:3-14.

⁹ And he^b made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 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.

¹¹ In him we were also chosen,^c 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. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

^b 8,9 Or *us*. *With all wisdom and understanding, he*

^c Or *were made heirs*

We will look at three things in the passage: (1) what it means that he made known to us the mystery of His will; (2) what the content of that mystery is; and (3) why it matters to us.

II. First, what does it mean that he made known to us the mystery of his will?

Verse 9 says,

“And he^b made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,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.”

What does he mean by the mystery of his will? A similar passage in Colossians 1:25-26 helps us understand it better. Paul says:

²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

The mystery of his will means that his will was hidden. We didn't know it. We didn't understand what God was up to. We didn't know where history was headed. It was hidden for ages and generations **but** now disclosed to believers (that's what saints mean).

It was hidden from the time of creation throughout the OT times, but it was revealed to us through the Apostles through Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying that there is a purpose to the world. God has a will for the world. And it is moving towards that direction. Not only for the world, but God has a purpose for you and your life.

We often wonder what is really going on in the world. We often wonder where the world is going. Does history have any purpose? Is the world purposeless? Is there a plan or does it just exist? Why do I exist? Is there a purpose of my existence? These are first order questions of life.

Leo Tolstoy, a Russian novelist, author of *War and Peace*, wrote a book called “Confession” in 1879 in which he tells the story of his search for meaning and purpose in life. He rejected Christianity as a child.

^b 8,9 Or *us*. *With all wisdom and understanding, he*

- After college, he sought to get as much **pleasure** out of life as he could. He entered the social world of St. Petersburg and Moscow, drank heavily, slept around, gambled heavily, and led a wild life. But acutely felt a sense of meaninglessness.
- Then he became ambitious for **money**. He inherited a large estate and made a lot of money from his books. Yet, this too was meaningless to him.
- He sought **success, fame, and importance**. He also achieved these. He wrote what the Encyclopedia Britannica describes as “one of the two or three greatest novels in world literature.” Yet, he asked, “so what?” to which he had no answers.
- Then he became ambitious for his family. He married in 1862 and had a kind, loving wife and 13 children (which, he said, distracted him from the overall search for the meaning of life).

He had achieved all his ambitions and was surrounded by what everyone would say is complete happiness. Yet, one question drove him to the verge of suicide: **“What meaning is there in my life which the inevitability of death does not destroy?”**

- He searched for answers from **science and philosophy**. The best answer he got to the question of “why I live” was that **“in infinity of space and the infinity of time infinite small particles mutate with infinite complexity.”** He didn’t find this very satisfying.
- So, he decided to look around at his contemporaries. He saw that they were not facing up to the first order questions of life. They were just avoiding the issue. They weren’t thinking about them.
- Eventually he found that the **peasant** people of Russia had been able to answer these questions through their **Christian** faith, and he realized that only in Jesus do we find the answer.

A hundred years later, nothing has changed.

- Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of the rock group Queen, who died in 1991, wrote in one of his songs on the *Miracle* album “Does anybody know what we are living for?”

If you get right down to it, the meaning of the universe, the meaning of our existence is hidden. That's what Paul tells us. We can try and try but we will not be able to see the meaning of the universe. Many just live in the Matrix without much thought and some who think about this decide to take the blue pill and stay in the Matrix. But, Paul says, God has revealed the mystery to us.

III. Second, what is the content of the mystery that has been revealed?

He says that history is moving towards a climax. In verse 9b-10 says: this mystery "which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reach their fulfillment." We don't know when the times will have reached their fulfillment, but it is coming someday. History is moving towards that fulfillment of time. And that time will be when Jesus comes back again. That's when it is going to be fulfilled.

What would it be like when it is fulfilled? "To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." That clause is the explanation of what the mystery of his will is. That is the content of the mystery that is revealed. The word translated as "to bring together" or to "unite" means to re-unite or re-bring together" because it has the prefix "ana" before the main stem to unite. God will REUNITE all things together under Christ.

Reunite means universe and its system were once united and have disintegrated. A system never happens by accident, they have to be designed. Clock is a system. Engine. There are many components that interact with one another. If one component is out of alignment, the whole system is out of whack. Grace's laptop got a virus. It was working fine but one thing went wrong and the whole system broke down. When something is out of alignment, the system disintegrates. Same with our body. If our lungs stop working, the whole system disintegrates. So, there is decay. Things fall apart. When you die, it disunites, it disintegrates. The whole system fell apart when one thing fails.

Originally the world was built to be under one head, Christ. Any system— political, economic, relational, biological, every system was created to work with headship of Christ. When headship of Christ was taken away, disintegration happened.

Romans 8:21-22 says:

that^a 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.

Here in Romans, Paul says all creation has been subjected to decay; the creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth. There is disintegration and decay of the system and that's what's causing the pain and suffering in this world.

Before, when we were under the headship of Christ, there was no war, no poverty, no pain, no suffering, no decay, and no death. There was no strife because everything was under the headship of Christ.

However, when Adam and Eve decided to take themselves out of alignment—"we are going to be our own master; we don't want to be under the headship of Christ"—when that happened, everything became disunited.

They felt cutoff from God (spiritual disintegration), they felt anxiety and fear (psychological disintegration), they were naked was shameful (social disintegration), then nature got out of alignment.

If you live for yourself, you are not under the lordship of Christ; you are experiencing disunity in your life. Even Freud talked about Id (our instincts), Ego (our rational part), and Superego (our moral part) and they are all fighting against each other. That's psychological disintegration. You don't know who you really are. You don't know which way to go. You don't understand yourself.

There is disunity in you. Your conscience tells you to do one thing. Your heart wants to do another. And you actually do something else all together. You don't want get another fix, you don't want to continue to hate, you don't want to continue in depression, you don't want to lust, you don't want to get angry, you don't want to go out of control, **but you do it anyway**. Paul puts it like this in Romans 7:15:

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do

^a 20,21 Or *subjected it in hope*. For

There is disintegration/disunity within ourselves. There is disintegration in our society. There is racism. There is classism. There is sexism. There is disintegration with God. There is disintegration in nature. Earthquake, famine, storms, hurricanes, mudslides, fires, etc.

The Bible is saying, there will be a time when God is going to bring everything back. The physical nature as beautiful as it is now is only a shadow of the beauty that is to come. I really liked Avatar the Movie because in some way, it was a human imagination of how much more beautiful nature can be. Jesus is going to be the Lord of all of all social systems. Psychological system will finally work. Spiritual alienation will be gone.

Our bodies will be resurrected. Our final destiny is not a place of spirits and souls. It is actually a physical place where everything is reintegrated, reunited with Christ, even our bodies. I know some of you have wondered how our bodies will be resurrected after it has decayed? Someone once asked me if it is okay for Christians to cremate the body. How will they be physically resurrected?

In 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44, Paul says:

³⁵ But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. [skip down to 42]

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Paul says our present bodies are like a seed, and the resurrected body is like an oak tree. That’s how different it is going to be. That’s how glorious it is going to be. If you suffer from illness, there will be no more. You’ll be running around, flying around. We all suffer from our sinful nature—the disintegration of ourselves: that will be no more. We will be reconciled completely.

We will be under the headship of Christ, completed whole, reunited, integrated. We will finally experience complete wholeness!

IV. Third, why does it matter to us now?

This means you shouldn't limit Christianity to what God can do for you now. He can do amazing things. He can liberate you from your addictions. He can free you from hate. He can free you from your darkness. He can give you an abundant life. BUT, wait until you find out what he is up to. Wait until you see the big picture of what he is doing! When you see the glory (which means the weightiness) of what he is up to, you will put things in your life into perspective. You will not want to live for yourself. You will want to live for him now. You will want to be a part of the mission of God. Your life will not be about your success, even your family, your happiness. It will be about the Kingdom of God!

If this is our destiny, the meaning of life becomes so clear:

(a) we are sojourners in this world. This is not where we hold our citizenship. Our citizenship is in the New Jerusalem, the New City, the Kingdom of God. So, our priority is on the matters of the Kingdom of God. If we take our eyes off the awesome plan of God, we will end up abusing God, using God for the purposes of this world, for our happiness, and things will not make sense. Things will only come into focus when we understand where we are headed.

(b) We are free to love without selfishness. When we know that things in this world are temporary and are just passing away, we are able to give away. During the early church, Christians lived by completely different values. Around 260 AD, there was an pandemic, and people in the cities were dying like crazy. We don't know exactly what it was but it was kind of like bubonic plague. People were leaving the city and the sick for fear of getting the disease. They were left for dead. There were corpses outside everywhere. But, history tells us that Christians stayed behind and took care of the sick and buried the dead. They were not afraid to die because they believe in the fulfillment of the promise of the Kingdom of God. I truly believe that our de-emphasis on the Kingdom of Heaven is contributing to the prosperity gospel and focus on selfish living as Christians.

(c) Our mission is to bring Kingdom of God to earth now. Isn't that what Jesus taught us to pray? Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That means to bring the unity, the integration of the Kingdom of God here. To bring the

life of the Kingdom down here. Jesus taught us a lot of about the Kingdom. It is about love. It is about serving, not being served. It is about going down, not going up. It is an upside down Kingdom. It is about grace, giving each other more than what they deserve. This also means we become environmentalists and honor the beauty of nature. It means we are all called to be tree-huggers. It means we are called to bring peace and become peace-makers. Do you see why bringing unity of heaven down here and following the teachings of Jesus Christ are the same?

(d) Also, our mission is to share the good news of God's plan with as many people as possible. Our mission is to bring people into the salvation that is in Christ. The only way into the headship of Christ is if we make Christ into our Lord and Savior. It makes complete sense that this Kingdom of God is available to those who want to make Christ as their Savior and Lord. If there is no desire to submit your life to Jesus, there is no movement into the Kingdom of God. How can we put off sharing this amazing good news? You see, if you take the good news of salvation as just one way to live in the world full of philosophies of life, then you would hesitate to share your philosophy on others. BUT, if the good news is about the coming Kingdom of God, how can you not share? Again, our undue emphasis on our life now has clouded our judgment regarding the importance of sharing of the gospel of salvation.

(e) If the final destiny is the headship of Christ, the extent to which we can experience this Kingdom now depends on how much we give our lives over to the headship of Jesus Christ.

Do you want to experience kingdom of God now? Do you want to taste the kingdom now? Submit your life to the work of the Holy Spirit in you! Submit your life to the headship of Christ now! You will begin to experience integration and unity in your life now.

Do you see how the meaning of your life comes into focus when you come to realize where history is headed? What the mystery of His will is? When you come to realize the beauty and power of the coming Kingdom, our purpose for this life becomes clear: it is to bring up there down here. It is to bring the Kingdom of God here to earth. It is to live our lives eschatological (with a future orientation). It is to love as Christ

loved. It is to give yourself away. It is honor and respect to the environment. It is to bring people to this Kingdom. That is the meaning of life!