

God's Purpose For The Church

'The purpose is that through the church, the complicated many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects, might now be made known to the evil rulers in the heavenly sphere. This is in accordance with the eternal purpose, which He has put into effect in the Person of Jesus our Lord' (Ephesians 3:10 & 11).

'And His gifts were varied; He gave some to be apostles (special messengers), some prophets (inspired preachers), some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel of the Kingdom), some pastors (shepherds of the flock), and teachers (expounders of the Word). His intention was the perfecting and fully equipping of His consecrated people, that they should do the work of ministering toward building up His body, which is the church. That it (the church) might develop until we all (Jews and Gentiles together) attain the oneness in the faith and in the full knowledge of the Son of God; that we might arrive at really mature spiritual manhood (the standard of Jesus' own perfection), the measure of the stature of fullness and the completeness found in Him' (Ephesians 4:11 to 13).

In simple language, the purpose of the church is to help people grow spiritually in all areas of their lives, so they will be able to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, through the preaching of the Word of God. 'Every scripture is God-breathed (or given by His inspiration) and is profitable for instruction, reproof, conviction of sin, correction of error, discipline in obedience, for training in righteousness, so that the man (or woman) of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17). 'I charge you in the presence of God and of our Messiah Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and in the light of His second coming and His Kingdom; preach the Word!! Keep the sense of urgency ... (2 Timothy 4:1 & 2).

'Do not neglect to assemble together as believers, as some people do; encouraging one another, all the more faithfully as you see the Day of the Lord approaching' (Hebrews 10:25).

The above passages of scripture tell us what God's purpose for the church is. The Lord is not talking about a religious group; He is talking about righteous people who habitually walk in righteousness and holiness, who have a close ongoing relationship with the Lord, and who worship Him. All born-again believers need constant refreshing through worship, breaking bread together, hearing the Lord speak through sermons, prophecies and receiving Holy Spirit inspired visions. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish, but He who keeps the commandments of God is blessed' (Proverbs 29:18). That kind of vision is a personal revelation from God for each individual person or the church they attend, in their situation and time. People must have a vision they can pursue so they can continue to move forward in God. A vision of the past is no more than history. When God's people do not have a fresh relevant vision they perish; they wither up and can become ineffective.

In the days of Eli there was no open vision. The people had the priesthood, the tabernacle, the law, Passover, festivals and sacrifices. They had everything that God had ordained, but they had no vision and the whole nation went into backsliding and defeat. God had to raise up a young boy named Samuel and give Him a direct revelation from God (1 Samuel 3:1 to 21). This kind of vision and revelation never supersedes or is contrary to scripture. Every new revelation must be in harmony with scripture, and even though it is in harmony with scripture, each generation of God's people need their own special revelation; what God would say to them at their time in their situation. We do need to be involved with a church to hear God purposes. When we study what is written to the seven churches

mentioned in the book of Revelation, the Lord spoke to the churches, not to individuals (Revelation chapters 2 & 3). If the people were not in the church, they would have missed the message given for their church in their generation.

The Lord regards genuine believers as His friends. "I do not call you servants any longer, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from My Father" (John 15:15). 'The Lord will do nothing without first revealing His secrets to His servants' (Amos 3:7), just as the Lord did before He flooded the earth, then later when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; and when He intended to destroy Nineveh. The Lord revealed to Noah, to Abraham and to Jonah exactly what He was going to do (Genesis 6:13; 18:17; Jonah 1:1 & 2; 3:2 & 4). Whenever God is going to do anything major, He always makes His purposes known to His people through prophetic revelation.

There is a destiny for every individual person and nation. The destiny for every nation differs, just as the destiny for individuals differs. 'The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nought ... blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord' (Psalm 33:10 & 12). This verse says; blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. If we look at the reverse side of that verse, we read; cursed is the nation whose god is not the Lord. The more believers the churches have, the more prayer is offered up for their nation.

The Lord has chosen Israel to bring forth His Word and the Messiah, but God is interested in every other nation too. Every nation has a destiny. Great Britain has certainly been one of the most blessed nations on earth. The Lord has used people from Great Britain to plant several other Christian nations, and thereby spread the Gospel. The United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and many other Christian nations, are all Gentile nations that have helped spread the Gospel in a wonderful way. Blessed are those nations because God is their Lord. Every nation is individual. The Gospel began in Israel and has spread from there by missionaries who have planted thousands of churches world-wide. Just as every person, church and nation have a destiny, so does each generation.

One day the whole world will bow to the Lord God Almighty. 'All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall bow down and worship before You; for the Kingship and the Kingdom are the Lord's and He is the Ruler over all the nations ... Posterity shall serve Him. They shall tell of the Lord to the next generation. They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born – that He has done it – that it is finished' (Psalm 22:27 to 31). 'So the nations shall fear the Lord; and all the kings (rulers) of the earth will revere Your glory ... Let this be recorded for the generation yet unborn, that a people yet to be created, shall praise the Lord' (Psalm 102:15 & 18). These two passages of scripture are confirmed in Revelation. 'For you were sacrificed and with Your blood You purchased men (and women) for God from every tribe, language and nation' (Revelation 5:9).

It was God's job to give us His Word, and it is our job to proclaim and spread it. It is our mandate – our commission. God did not give us permission to edit or try to improve the Gospel – He just said preach it. When we proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom – then He will confirm it with signs following. The full Gospel is a declaration that Jesus is our King, because it is the Gospel of the Kingdom and every Kingdom need a King. The full Gospel is not a weak or watered down religion – it is a message of power. We do not have to apologise for spreading the Word nor should we need to give any explanation. The Gospel is the Gospel of repentance, faith, power, then followed by good works. We have to teach with authority and boldness to all nations, tribe (family group) and language.

The outpouring of the Holy spirit is so we are equipped for these good works; for the harvest. The Holy Spirit is not for us to feel warm and fuzzy and to build big, fancy buildings. It is to empower us to preach the Gospel to all nations, and to prepare the whole world for Jesus' second coming. That is why God is pouring out His Spirit. The 'rain' of the Spirit is given for the harvest of souls. 'Let us now fear and worship the Lord our God, Who gives rain, both the early and the latter rain in its season; Who keeps for us the appointed weeks of the harvest' (Jeremiah 5:24). The early 'rain' was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early church, and the latter 'rain' is the current outpouring of the Holy Spirit that is happening now.

If we do not consistently preach the Gospel to all nations, the following verse may be the result; 'The harvest is passed, the summer has ended, that gathering of the fruit is over, yet we are not saved!' (Jeremiah 8:20). 'So be patient, brethren till the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the harvest from the land. He remains patient until the early and the late rains. So you also must be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near' (James 5:7 & 8).

Prophecy spoken out in the church is the revelation given by the Holy Spirit for God's purposes for His people, and how they are to be worked out. Three reasons for prophecy is to understand God's purposes; to find our place in God's purposes/show God's vision for His people/show direction; and to warn about His impending judgement. Moses had such a close relationship with the Lord, they spoke face to face like friends (Exodus 33:11). That is the depth of relationship we need to establish with God, through Jesus.

Prophecy spoken in the church should always line up with scripture, although it can be meant for the individual church. Prophecy spoken by the Old Testament prophets and written down for us to read, are the prophecies Peter is referring to; 'We have the prophetic word made stronger. You will do well to pay close attention to it as to a lamp shining in the darkness, until the dawn breaks through and the morning star rises in your hearts. You must understand this; no prophecy of Scripture is of any personal interpretation; for no prophecy ever originated from man, but men spoke from God who were inspired by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:19 to 21).

The morning star mentioned in this verse refers to the brightness of the dawn shortly before the sun rises. The best place to see the morning star is over the sea on the eastern side of the land. It is sometimes so bright we may think the sun is actually rising early. The world is in spiritual darkness and does not know or understand what is going on. In that dark place, we have the prophecy of scripture as a light. Peter was saying, if we listen to and obey the scriptures, the brightness of the morning star will rise in our hearts. It is the realisation of the enormity of our salvation. We no longer fear death or hell. Nothing has power over us. It is as though the realisation of salvation 'dawns' on us. We will have an inner light in our heart even though we live in a spiritually dark world. The sun (the Son) is rising in our hearts and He is coming back soon. His coming is the reason we have had so many prophecies given to us. We need to find our place in God for our individual lives, and one role of the church is to help us find our place. Prophecy awakens us to the fact that Jesus is coming back and we need to be ready and diligently working at the time of His appearing. Jesus said, "Blessed is the servant whom his master finds so doing when He arrives" (Luke 12:43).

Amen and God bless you.

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