

## **God's Purpose For The Church And The Mystery Of Salvation**

'The purpose is that through the church, all men may see what the Administration of the mystery is, which for eons has been hidden in God, Who created all things through Jesus so the manifold (varied) wisdom of God, might be revealed to the evil rulers, principalities and powers in heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose (of salvation) which He put into effect through Jesus our Lord' (Ephesians 3:9 to 11).

'To God Who is able to establish you according to the Gospel and the preaching of Jesus, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret through long ages but is now revealed, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God is made known for obedience of faith to all the nations' (Romans 14:24 & 25).

'His gifts were varied; He gave some the gift to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and some teachers. His intention was the perfecting of His consecrated people so they could do the work of ministering and building up His Body, which is the church, so the church might develop until we all (Jews and Gentiles together) attain the unity of faith and in the full knowledge of the Son of God, we might arrive at spiritual maturity to the measure of the stature of fullness of Jesus' (Ephesians 4:11 to 13).

'Every scripture is God-breathed (inspired) and is profitable for teaching, reproof, conviction of sin, for correction and 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 command you in the presence of God and of our Messiah Jesus, Who will judge the living and the dead at His second coming and His Kingdom; preach the Word! Keep the sense of urgency ... (2 Timothy 4:1 & 2).

God's purpose for the church is to spread the Gospel, which spells out in detail what the ancient mystery of eternal salvation is. The mystery of salvation was kept hidden for thousands of years. God gave hints but kept the greatness of our salvation secret right up until Jesus was born. Even the holy angels did not know what this mystery was and they longed to know. The prophets knew they were prophesying about salvation but they also knew it was not for their time. They also wanted to know the details but it was kept from them. 'Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace (of salvation) that would come to you sought and searched diligently, searching for Who or when the Spirit of Messiah which was in them pointed to, when he predicted the sufferings of Jesus and the glories that would follow them. To them (the prophets) the mystery of salvation was revealed but not for themselves, but to you (born-again believers in Jesus) they ministered these things, which now have been announced to you through those who preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, which things angels desire to look into' (1 Peter 1:10 to 12). It is by revelation of the Holy Spirit the mystery of salvation is made known to us (Ephesians 3:3). It is the purpose of the church to tell the world about salvation by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 16:15).

We need to understand, this salvation is the redemption of our soul (1 Peter 1:9) not the salvation of our mortal bodies. Our soul will live forever and will exist long after our mortal body has been consumed. What we have to decide is whether we want our soul to be saved and enjoy eternal life with God, or people can choose to refuse to accept Jesus and their soul will be sent to the Lake of Fire forever along with the devil, the false prophet, the beast, the fallen angels and the evil spirits. That is the mystery that has been revealed to humanity but the choice is ours. Through the blood of Jesus, God has made the only way of salvation for our souls but whether we go to heaven or not up to us to decide. Salvation is simple. All anyone has to do is believe, repent, choose to turn to God and away from ungodliness, then choose to walk with God for the remainder of your life, choose to obey the instructions written in the Bible, get baptised in water by full immersion and allow God to purify your attitudes, your behaviour, your thought patterns, your speech etc until you can grow in God and become the holy person He expects of everyone. With the correct attitude, this can be an enjoyable journey. With the wrong attitude, it could become a stumbling block. The most important thing is, regularly reading the Bible is vital to Spiritual growth. Those who rarely read the Bible tend to behave in a very carnal manner. The Bible helps us grow, it teaches us the ways of God and reminds us of the many promises written down for us to remember. Attending church is important especially for new Christians.

The mystery of salvation was hidden so the invisible evil rulers, the principalities and wicked powers ruling the lower levels of heaven could not find out. God did not want them to thwart His plan for the salvation of mankind so He kept the details to Himself. The devil knew salvation was to come via the Jewish people and has tried to destroy them several times as we can read in the Old Testament. As soon as the devil realised Jesus was the answer to the mystery, he tried to kill Him as we can read in the Gospels. Jesus Himself spread the Gospel around Israel until He was murdered by the Gentile Romans influenced by evil, which was a grave mistake by the devil. 'We speak God's wisdom in a mystery (of salvation), the wisdom that has been

hidden, which God foreordained before the creation of the world for our glory, which none of the (invisible) evil rulers of this world has known. Had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory' (1 Corinthians 2:7 & 8). From the initial message of salvation Jesus taught, the mystery of salvation, which was no longer a mystery, was then spread throughout the known world by Messianic Jewish believers who were later joined by dedicated Gentiles. The initial 'Assemblies' that preached 'The Way' became the church whose mandate was to continue spreading the Gospel message, first taught by Jesus. The church was never intended to replace Israel or Judaism. God has always been the Rock of our salvation (Psalm 89:26 & 95:1) and that mandate has been passed on to Jesus our Rock. That means Judaism is the foundation and basis of Christianity. Christianity is the extension of Judaism.

In simple language, God's purpose for the church is not to try to replace Israel because the church will never replace Israel. The purpose of the church is to reveal to the evil kingdom what the mystery of eternal salvation is about, and to help people become born-again then grow spiritually in all areas of their lives so they will be able to reach spiritual maturity to the level of Jesus, then they can spread the Gospel of the Kingdom of God through the preaching of the Word of God, and we are called to fellowship together with other believers so we can encourage one another. 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 guidance from the Holy Spirit. 'Those who keep the commandments of God are blessed' (Proverbs 29:18). All pastors should encourage individuals in their flock to pursue their own revelation or vision, as long as it lines up with the Word of God and is in harmony with Scripture. A revelation from the Lord should never cause disunity, should never supersede or be contrary to Scripture nor should the pastor feel threatened by the vision of another person. We all have our own God-given job to do to serve God and a Spiritually mature person should be free to obey the Lord using the talents the Lord has given them, without any interference from church leadership, on condition the vision is from the Lord and the person wishing to obey the Lord must be submit to God for He is our Head. Sadly, there are many people who cannot attend a church for various reasons but they will not miss out on fellowship with God or revelations from Him as long as they are close to God, spend time in prayer and listen to His quiet voice. Some people have an unbelieving spouse who prevents them attending church. Some people are too ill. Sometimes there is no church nearby or no transport. Born-again former Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or people in communists countries cannot tell anyone they have turned to Jesus for fear of persecution or death so they cannot attend church. That does not mean God has forgotten them and He will reveal things to them individually as they grow in Him. 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). Moses had such a close relationship with the Lord, they spoke face to face like friends (Exodus 33:11) making Moses one of the greatest prophets ever.

The Lord has chosen Israel to bring forth His Word and the Messiah, but God is interested in every other nation since Jesus came and salvation was offered to Gentiles. 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 and as we know, the language of England (English) has been mightily effective in spreading the Gospel around the modern world. The once marauding Vikings were converted to Christianity in England then took the Gospel back to Scandinavia and their once violent behaviour ceased. 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. Europe also has many God-fearing countries. Blessed are those nations because God is their Lord (Psalm 33:12). The Gospel began in Israel and has spread from there, first by Jewish missionaries and later by Christians who have taken the Gospel of the Kingdom worldwide. One day the whole world will bow to the Lord God Almighty (Romans 14:11). 'All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You, for the Kingdom is the Lord's and He is the Ruler over all the nations ... Posterity will serve Him. Future generations will be told of the Lord. They will come and declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born – that He has done it – that it is finished' (Psalm 22:27 to 31). 'The nations will fear the name of the Lord and all the kings (rulers) of the earth will revere Your glory ... Let this be written for the generation yet unborn, a people yet to be created will 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, people 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 He will sometimes 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

needs 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 and power, then followed by good works and culminating in our entrance into the Kingdom of God. 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 and for the harvest of unsaved souls. 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 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 has been happening since the 1950's. 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, the 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 or prepare your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near' (James 5:7 & 8). That is the depth of relationship we need to establish with God, through Jesus.

The prophecies written in the Old Testament were written down for us to read and are the same prophecies Apostle Peter was referring to. 'We have the sure (true) words of prophecy. You will do well to pay attention to them like a lamp shining in the darkness until the dawn comes and the Morning Star rises in your hearts. You must understand this, no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation, for no prophecy ever came from the will of man but holy men of God spoke, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:19 to 21). The Morning Star mentioned in this verse refers to Jesus. 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 to guide us. If we listen to and obey the Scriptures, the brightness of the Morning Star will rise in our hearts confirming the enormity of our salvation. We are saved by grace and faith but many are lost. We no longer fear death or hell. Nothing has power over us. It is as though the realisation of salvation 'dawns' on us. We 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 in the Bible. 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 asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Then Jesus said, "Blessed is the servant whom his master finds so doing when He arrives" (Luke 12:43). "I Jesus, have sent My holy angel to testify these things to you for the assemblies (churches). I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16).

Amen and God bless you.

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