

## I. The Plan of the Church

### *Scripture Reading*

*Ephesians 3:10–11 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Ephesians speaks exclusively of the church. It begins from eternity past, unfolding according to God's eternal counsel and divine desire. It reveals that the church was planned by God long before the ages began, in the unbeginning eternity. Before all things were created and time came into being, God purposed to have the church. Thus the church is eternal in nature, established entirely out of God's divine plan.

All human plans stem from personal desires and needs, intended to fulfill one's own wishes and satisfy personal demands. God's plan concerning the church is no exception. As revealed in the Scriptures, the church is exactly what God longs for and what God needs. God desires and needs the church, which is indispensable for fulfilling His heart's longing and satisfying His divine need. Such desire and need of God did not arise temporarily within time after creation, but existed eternally long before the ages. Therefore in endless eternity, God purposed to bring forth the church in accordance with His own desire and need.

We tend to regard the church merely as something belonging to this present age. Many naturally suppose it came into being simply because sinners were saved and became believers, existing to meet human needs. Such views are shallow and far from God's revelation concerning the church. According to the revelation of the New Testament, the church originates from God's eternal desire and predestined plan before the foundation of the world. It is not a temporary arrangement formed within

time after creation, nor does it come into existence due to human changes or worldly demands. The church did not emerge out of temporal necessity, coincidence or natural occurrence; it was brought forth in eternity according to God's profound sacred longing and far-reaching divine plan. Hence we ought not to view the church merely through worldly perspectives and present feelings, but understand it from God's eternal desire and His plan established ages ago.

### ***Scripture Reading***

*Ephesians 1:3–4* *blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*

In Epistle to the Ephesians 1:4, the word "even as" corresponds to the Greek term καθὼς (kathōs). This word means far more than merely "when" or "at the same time"; it carries the deeper implications of "according to", "in line with" and "in conformity with". Paul is not stating that God blessed us while He chose us simultaneously. What he truly conveys is that all spiritual blessings God bestows upon us in Christ today are given according to His eternal choice of us before the foundation of the world. In other words, every spiritual experience we gain today never happens by chance, nor are they temporary favors decided by God at a later time. Instead, they were ordained by God in eternity long before the creation of the world. God chose us in eternity first, and in due time, He fulfills this eternal purpose in us step by step. Hence all present spiritual blessings are simply the manifestation of God's eternal will.

We often hold the notion that God comes to help us only after we have needs, and saves us only after we fall short. Yet Paul reveals here that God's work toward us is neither an impulsive decision nor a remedy made after things take place. Long before the world came into being, God purposed in Christ to gain a group of people

for Himself.

Therefore, the truth that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ even as He chose us before the foundation of the world is more than a plain logical statement. It means the root of all spiritual grace we experience today lies in God's eternal election. Our salvation, knowledge of the Lord, enjoyment of Christ, spiritual growth and participation in church life are never accidental, nor do they come from our own merits, but originate from God's predetermined eternal counsel.

It is just like branches, leaves and fruits growing out of a tree. They never emerge out of nowhere, but come forth from the inherent life and original design within the tree. Present spiritual blessings are like the fruits borne on the tree, while God's predestination before creation is the hidden source of life inside the tree. All outward manifestations are fulfilled in accordance with the eternal will established long beforehand.

What Paul intends to emphasize most is that God's grace toward us today is not transient, arbitrary or changeable, but flows out of His eternal plan. God foresaw us and chose us in Christ even before time began, and gradually accomplishes this eternal plan in our lives as time unfolds. Spiritual blessings are not merely separate gifts, but the outward expression of God's eternal purpose.

For this reason, when Paul uses "even as" (καθὼς), he does not merely indicate concurrent events, but conveys this core truth: God blesses us in such ways today simply because He resolved to do so in eternity past.

This truth brings profound rest to our hearts. For our relationship with God is not built upon our fleeting feelings, personal conduct or spiritual zeal, but firmly established upon God's unchanging eternal will.

Based on the revelation in these verses in Epistle to the Ephesians, we can see that God's choosing of us and God's choosing of the church were not something temporary or spontaneous. Rather, before the foundation of the world, God had already planned and prepared all these things. Therefore, God created the universe

and all things with one unique purpose — for the church.

## II. The Mystery of the Church

Since the church's origin and establishment were predetermined by God long before the world was founded, did He openly reveal this plan from the very start? The answer is no. Although God ordained this eternal purpose ages ago, He concealed it within Himself for an extended period (very long period of time). Only when the Lord Jesus came and fulfilled redemption was the church brought into being.

### *Scripture Reading*

*Ephesians 1:5* he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

*Ephesians 3:9–10* and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

After God formed His eternal plan for the church according to His own heart's desire, He proceeded to create all things in time in fulfillment of this plan. God created everything solely to accomplish His purpose concerning the church, that He might obtain the church amid all creation to satisfy His heart and fulfill His divine need. Though this is the very intent behind creation, God never revealed this secret purpose to any creature since the beginning of the world. Thus this truth became a mystery hidden in God the Creator alone. Only He knew why He made all things, and

that His ultimate aim was to gain the church, yet He kept this truth unrevealed to mankind. Even in the Old Testament era, He did not disclose it to godly patriarchs or faithful prophets. The entire Old Testament contains no mention whatsoever of the church, making it a mystery concealed throughout all generations until God unveiled it to His holy apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament age.

Men always keep precious and important secrets hidden deep within their hearts, and the church is exactly such a precious treasure in God's sight. God chose to hide this great mystery within Himself until the appointed time came. For this reason, mankind has long been puzzled by the meaning of the universe. Not only unbelievers far from God fail to understand the purpose of creation, but even those patriarchs who walked closely with God and prophets who spoke His words remained unaware of the true significance of all created things. This ignorance persists even in the New Testament era. Today, the world still views the universe as an unsolved riddle, and numerous believers also fail to grasp its real meaning. Only a small number of enlightened believers know that the whole universe exists for the sake of the church. Even in this church age, the church remains a hidden mystery to most people including many believers. Though God has revealed this truth, most have not perceived it, so the church is still veiled to them. One can truly know the church only through personal divine revelation, for it is a profound mystery hidden in God, which can never be comprehended apart from His own unveiling.

### ***Scripture Reading***

***Matthew 13:44*** *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field*

In this verse, the kingdom of heaven is likened to treasure hidden in a field, and the meaning of being hidden in the field signifies being concealed. Here the kingdom of heaven refers to the church. Many people assume the kingdom of heaven has no connection with the church, yet this is not the case at all. The kingdom of heaven is the realm where God reigns. Where God rules today is among believers, and believers

constitute the church. In other words, God brings the authority of His heavenly kingdom down to the earth through the church.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven speaks of the realm where God exercises His dominion within the church, representing the reality the church ought to live out and the divine nature it is meant to manifest. From Matthew 13:44, we can see that this manifestation of God accomplished through the church was once like treasure buried unseen in the ground. It remained undiscovered until the Lord Jesus came to fulfill redemption. When He became the life-giving Spirit, sent forth divine grace from heaven and brought the church into being, the kingdom of heaven was finally revealed to all.

Therefore, from this parable we can easily see that the reality of the kingdom of heaven manifested through the church's life was once like treasure hidden in the earth, unknown and unseen by men. It was not revealed until the coming of the Lord Jesus.