

## Sermon – 24/02/2008 am

### Consummation in Christ

Study Text: Ephesians 1:9–10

In Ephesians the gospel of Jesus Christ is revealed in all its wonder and beauty. We see the fulfilment of God's great plan of salvation, his plan from the very beginning. From the time of the Fall, God was building his church. He declared the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent in Genesis 3:15. To Abraham he promised 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'. Through Moses and the prophets God continued to make his will known to the Jews. He was erecting the scaffolding as it were for the greatest revelation of all time in all the universe.

In Jesus Christ, God revealed himself fully and finally. *We beheld his glory the glory of the one and only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Jesus completed the work the Father sent him to do, the great work of *redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins* (1:7). In this passage which continues the opening doxology of this letter, Paul goes on to tell of the cosmic significance of the work of Christ. God has made him head of the church, which is his body, and as such put all things under him (1:22).

The centurion who told Jesus he was not worthy to have him come under his roof amazed Jesus. He said that he as a commander had authority to say to his servants to come and go, and he believed Jesus had the same authority, not over servants but over sickness, evil spirits and even death. No wonder Jesus was amazed at such belief (Luke 7). In this passage Paul wants us to understand what the centurion understood and more. Jesus is the chief steward of the house of God as we will see.

### Mystery Made Known

Paul was fond of this word 'mystery' using it seven times in this letter alone. Some people like the idea of a mystery especially when it comes to religion. False teachers coming into the church in those early days probably liked to use the word mystery, and maybe Paul was countering them. Even today we have those who tell us we need something more than the Bible which is old and outdated. The Mormons come around with their book of Mormon and of course some churches come up with their own book of rules and regulations. Some say we need a second blessing to be fully in Christ. These additional teaching are man-made and so under the control of men. Men get power for themselves through this secret knowledge.

Here we read that God has *made known to us the mystery of his will* (1:9). The mystery Paul speaks of is an open secret to all believers. See what he writes at the close of his letter to the Romans – 'according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest by the Scriptures to all nations'. The mystery is now made known to all the world.

This revelation was the will of God. It was his good pleasure. It was not revealed through man's careful study. It was not revealed by man's rituals or beating of his body – or sitting under some tree! God chose to reveal himself in Jesus Christ and in Christ all his plans and purpose for mankind, and for this universe.

What is this mystery you ask? We have just gone into the heart of it, but for clarity we see Paul points us to two aspects of this mystery. Firstly it is Christ in you the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Christ himself is the mystery of God revealed, Christ who died to save you from sin and rose from the dead, and now lives in you by his Spirit. This was the great hope of the saints of old – ‘Abraham saw my day and was glad’ said Jesus. Are you glad to see Jesus Christ? How blessed we are to see Jesus today fully revealed to us in the word of God and through eyes opened by the Holy Spirit.

The second aspect of the mystery is the bringing in of the Gentiles – which includes most of us I would think. The Jews of Paul’s day were not at all concerned to make God’s glory and promises known to the Gentiles. But Paul, himself a proud Jew was totally changed when he met Jesus on the Damascus road. This dramatic encounter with the risen Jesus changed his heart and mind completely. To him was revealed the glorious gospel and he was commissioned by Jesus to take this gospel to the Gentiles.

Not so many years ago a great wall divided the country of Germany. In fact it divided the whole political world, east from west. Anyone caught trying to cross this wall was shot on sight. No one thought that this wall would come crashing down, as it did in 1989. There was a great wall between Jew and Gentile, a wall between the people of God and those not his people. This wall came crashing down in Jesus Christ (2:14). Jesus came for all the nations. He is the only way to the Father for people from nations, tribes and languages. Through him we both, that is Jew and Gentile, have access to the Father (2:18).

The Berlin wall has come down. The wall between Jew and Gentile has come down, but what about walls in the church today? Are there any walls, invisible walls in your church? I once heard someone say ‘but these people are our own’ referring to those from Christian families as distinct from new believers. Are new believers welcomed in your church? What if they have a different skin colour? What if they speak another language? What if they are not wearing shoes?

This brings us back to the heart of this mystery which is that in Christ God has united all people and indeed all things in heaven and on earth (1:10). God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Indeed the whole of creation will in the fullness of time be united in and under Christ.

## **Cosmic Christ**

In Daniel 2 is the picture of a stone striking a great image representing the kingdoms of the world. The stone demolished these kingdoms and itself grew into a great mountain which filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:35). Who is that stone? It is picture of Jesus Christ. As the King in the kingdom of God he will fill the whole earth.

Jesus said ‘I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it’ (Matthew 16). The church is likened to a building that is being built with Christ as the cornerstone. That building will engulf the whole world, the whole universe. The picture of the church as the body of Christ conveys the same truth. Paul tells us that the church is the body of Christ. God gave him (Jesus) to be head over all things to the church (1:22).

What are we told in this passage before us? The he (God) might gather in one all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth – in him (1:10). Other translations have ‘to unite all things’ – literally it is to sum up all things. This word was used in relation to totalling up a list of figures like in your grocery bill. The same word is found in Rom 13:9 – commandments 6 to 10 were summed up by Paul into the one – love your neighbour as yourself.

We have used the word consummation which includes the idea of summation. *In the stewardship* (literally house management) *of the fullness of times* (1:10). Jesus is the chief steward or manager of the household of God as we saw earlier. This household is the only household that will remain in the fullness of times, so Jesus is effectively over the whole universe – the cosmic Christ.

All history will be summed up in Christ. The whole universe will be summed up in Christ. Creation is eagerly awaiting the sons of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19). All things were created through Christ wrote Paul in Colossians 1:16 and they were created for him also. At present writes Paul creation is subject to futility because of sin – and who is going to argue with that. But the time is coming when the whole universe will be gathered together into one in Christ. This will be through his headship of the church which is his body.

Do you share this outlook on life with the apostle Paul or are you simply looking to Jesus to give you material blessings in this world? Belonging to the household of God has cosmic consequences. In Christ God has us blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Do you ever contemplate these wonderful blessings and give thanks to God? Do you live with your mind set on things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God?

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