

Article of the Month
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THE OBJECTIVE

The great Apostle Paul seemed to have a particular affection for the church at Ephesus. When Paul had such feelings for brethren, he often gave them truths of a particularly poignant nature. In his epistle to the Ephesians, he gives a remarkable summary of THE OBJECTIVE of the entire Divine Plan — a few-verse summary of the entire Bible's story.

We need that kind of epitomized statement of things from time to time to help us keep from getting lost in detail. In Ephesians 1:8-10 we are given such a summary. It is so good, and its lessons are so important that we will first quote it from three translations in order to see how translators have treated this message. We will show the King James Version, The New American Standard, and finally the first edition of Dr. Weymouth's insightful 19th Century translation. This third version we find to be the most inspiring. But the passage so well summarizes WHAT GOD WANTS, that examining it in multiple translations is wise.

- KJV: 8. ...he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;
9. having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:
10. that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

- NAS: 8. ...In all wisdom and insight
9. He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him
10. with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth...

- WEY: 8-10. ...so abundant was God's grace, the grace which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when He made known to us the secret of His will. And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one head in Christ; yes, things in Heaven and things on earth, to find their one head in Him.

The points which the Apostle makes should lodge in our hearts giving us the anticipation of what God has in store for all of His creation.

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(1) God “lavished upon us” this information. It is lavishing to be made informed of God’s thought processes! He “made known to us” something which has not been made known to everyone. This is why the Apostle calls it a “mystery” or a “secret.” Contrary to the way some people use “mystery,” it does not mean that nobody understands it! Biblically the word means that it is understood only by a select group. That is why Weymouth calls it a “secret.” A “secret” is something kept in confidence between agreeing parties. In this case, the parties are God and us! This is an important point. It is telling us that ONLY A SELECT FEW understand the Bible. As widely as it is circulated and read, only the faithful “body of Christ” understand its “mysteries.”

(2) This “secret” or “mystery” is said to be about God’s “will.” We can all appreciate that God’s “will” is complex and multifaceted. It has objectives all over His universe. It reaches far into the future in areas which He has not even begun to explain to us. But it is quite clear from the passage that Paul writes, that God’s “will” here referred to is His “will” concerning mankind — the subject of the entire Bible.

(3) Weymouth, perhaps better than the others, helps us to understand that God “CHERISHES in His own mind” this “secret.” What an insight this gives us! If God has a particularly “cherished” thing on His mind, it must be of the most wonderful characteristics! And, if He “cherishes” it, how much we should also want to learn of it and to cherish it with Him! The KJV puts it a little less excitingly when it tells us that it is God’s “good pleasure” which God “purposed in Himself.” But even that terminology should get us thinking. “Good pleasure” invokes very joyful and satisfying thoughts which God purposed or determined “in Himself” — in His infinite thought processes.

(4) So, what IS this wonderful “secret” which God “cherishes?” It is, as Weymouth suggests, a “merciful purpose.” This should not surprise us as we have come to know of God’s merciful character — quite different from how He is represented in many creeds. God “cherishes in His own mind” the kind of government He will establish ONCE IT IS TIME. The NAS calls it an “administration.” The KJV calls it a “dispensation.” “Government” is the word most meaningful to most of us. WHEN are “the times ripe for it?” Most of us would instinctively probably say, “I hope it’s soon!” Well, it is. All of the prophecies and the visible evidences based on those prophecies tell us that now is, indeed, the very doorstep of that new government.

(5) Weymouth says it will involve “restoring the whole creation.” Acts 3:19-21 confirms that this is the purpose of Christ’s second advent. The KJV calls it a gathering “together into one.” The NAS says “the summing up of all things in Christ.

(6) God will use our Lord, Jesus, as the active agent in fulfilling this “cherished” secret. The “gathering together” (KJV) of all things will be a gathering of them into Christ’s influence or government — a gathering under his headship. It is clear that this will be the answer to the great prayer which Jesus taught in Matthew 6. The prayer requests God’s Kingdom to come and His “will” to be done BOTH in heaven and on earth. Paul has just shown us that God’s “will” IS this new government when the times are ripe for

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it. As Ephesians shows, “things in heaven and things on earth” will “find their one head in him.”

(7) Thus we have THE WHOLE STORY. The entire Bible, the entire summary of God’s will which He cherishes for mankind, is that there will soon be a NEW GOVERNMENT of inestimable blessings, including eternal life. We obviously need the WHOLE Bible, or God would never have supplied it. But it is so kind of God, in this case through the Apostle Paul, to give us, here and there, little complete summaries of what we can expect. We are grateful for this. We are grateful for the clarity. The more we see it all in its magnificent simplicity, we pray with even greater fervently, “Thy Kingdom Come!”
