The Church: Before Creation

Intro: In Eph. 3:11 “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:” Paul gives the great concept of “the eternal purpose.” In the silent counsels of eternity past, the infinite mind of God formed and framed a purpose—a great scheme of redemption to the glory of God and for the salvation of man.

I. THE PREMILLENNIAL POSITION
   A. They sever the church from God’s eternal purpose.
      1. “From the moment Christ bowed His head and yielded up His Spirit to the Father, all the glories of the kingdom spoken by the Old Testament seers and prophets have held in abeyance...The prophetic clock stopped at Calvary. Not one tick has been heard since.” (H. A. Ironside, The Mysteries Of God, 1946, p. 54)
      2. “He, Jesus, would have set up the kingdom but they, the Jews, rejected and crucified Him. The kingdom did come nigh when Christ came and had they received Him, it would have been manifested but now it is in abeyance.” (Wm. E. Blackstone, Jesus Is Coming, 1908, p. 87f).
      3. “In its doctrine of the Church dispensationalism holds that they Jewish rejection of the kingdom caused Jesus to postpone the kingdom until the Second Advent and to establish the church as an interlude between the two adven ts and that the church was in no sense a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies but something entirely new...” (Loraine Boettner The Millennium, 1974, p. )
      4. “The church is a mere parenthesis, an afterthought in God’s program of redemption, a valley invisible to Old Testament prophets...in dealing with the church, history has left the main highway and is making a detour; and God ignores the flight of time until he deals again with the Jews. Israel is like a scheduled train that has been put on a side tract temporarily but will be put on the main tract, the main line again, as soon as the unscheduled Gentile-Special has passed though.” (Wm. Hendrickson, And So All Israel Shall Be Saved, 1945, p. 7)
      5. Thus the church does not fulfill the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament.
   B. Christ came to establish an earthly kingdom.
      1. In the days of John and Jesus this kingdom was “nigh” or near.
      2. But the plan was thwarted by the Jewish rejection of Jesus.
      3. As a result the “church age” came into being, and they thus see it as a parenthesis or interlude.
      4. The church thus is distinct from and secondary to the kingdom which is yet future.
II. **The Eternal Purpose**

A. Did God have a purpose, plan, scheme of redemption from before the foundation of the world?

1. Some think Gen. 6:6 “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” teach that God was caught napping; that God’s dealing with man involved one long series of audibles called at the line of scrimmage.

2. But God did have a purpose.

   a. Acts 2:23 “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:"

      (1) God was not surprised by the cross.

      (2) It was a predetermined death, in accord with God’s foreknowledge.

   b. 1 Pet. 1:18-20 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,”

   c. Rom. 8:28-30 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

   d. 2 The. 2:13 “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"

   e. 2 Tim. 1:9 “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”

B. Eph. 1:3-14 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10That in the dispensation of the fulness 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: 11In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

1. Outline:

   a. Vs. 3-6: God’s the architect and fountainhead of all spiritual blessings.
b. Vs. 7-12: Jesus as the summing up of God’s purpose and the channel of His blessings.

c. Vs. 13-14: The Holy Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance.

2. “Purpose” is the key word.

a. It embraces time and eternity.

b. The activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

c. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile.

d. The church as active and engaged in conflict on earth and in the heavenlies.

C. Paul’s doctrine of God’s purpose is not Calvinistic.

III. THE CHURCH IN THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

A. **Eph. 3:8-12**  
“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”

1. The church lies right at the heart of the eternal purpose of God.

2. The theme of Ephesians is the church in the eternal purpose.

B. The eternal purpose lying back of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

1. **Gen. 3:15**  
“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”; cf. **Heb. 2:14**  
“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”

2. **Gen. 12:1-3, 7**  
“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.”; **Gen. 15:18**  
“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:”

a. a nation — land promise. It is physical, material and temporal.

b. the spiritual promise. It is spiritual, universal, and its eternal.

c. This promise is confirmed:

1. to Isaac: Gen. 26

2. to Jacob: Gen. 28:10-14  
“And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. 11And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the
Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed: 14And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

d. Gal. 3:16 “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

3. Gen. 49:10 “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

4. 2 Sam. 7:11-14 “And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. 12And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablishe the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:” cf. Rom. 1:3 “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;”

5. Isa. 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” cf. Mat. 1:23 “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

C. All the predictive statements came to fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

1. Luke 1:32-33 “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

2. Acts 2:29-31 “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

3. Eph. 1:9-10 “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10That in the dispensation of the fulness 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:” all things are summed up in Christ.

4. Eph. 1:22-23 “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. 23Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” The church is the fulness of Christ.

D. It was the law and not the church that is a kind of parenthesis.

Conclusion: Eph. 3:20-21 “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” Glory is to be ascribed to Him in the church, not only in the “church-age” but world without end. No wonder we can sing, “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord.”