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THE MYSTERY--THE MILLENNIUM--AND THE INHERITANCE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 6
EPHESIANS 1:9-12

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EPHESIANS 1:9-12 "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That 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: In 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: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

Everyone of us has done things of which we are ashamed. So often we carry around a mental attitude of being ashamed of certain things we have done. (Now if you are so self-righteous that you have never done anything of which you are ashamed, then God pity you.) We are here today not because we are perfect, but we are here because we have sinned. By being a member of the human race, it means we have sinned. Often our failures are our greatest handicaps.

Now maybe the reason you can't think is because you carry around a mental attitude of being ashamed. So haul out your mental attitude of being ashamed and dump it at the Lord's feet. Are you carrying around a guilt complex today? You cheated in business, or in the classroom. You committed some sin for which you should have been ostracized, but you weren't. Maybe you have been ashamed of your parents at times, or ashamed of your humble upbringing, and you carry this guilt around with you all the time.

In the emotion of your soul, you have a "forgetter," so you use this little switch and put this mental attitude of being ashamed way down in the cellar of the subconscious, and then go out and do things that will make you forget. Maybe you will get real active in the church, and since you have been such a louse, you are trying to make it up to God for what you have done. But remember, being ashamed brings on a guilt complex. God designed a plan in eternity past and on one side of the coin was "Not ashamed" and on the other side was "relaxed mental attitude." Now for just a moment, be honest with yourself, and face the facts of your life. Are you ashamed of anything you have done and tonight do you have a guilt complex? Well, you need not keep going down a road like that. Remember, God has a plan for you and he has provided for everything and you have a relaxed mental attitude and no reason for being ashamed. Being ashamed is the first area in a soul kink and a guilt complex is the second area in a soul kink. Now how can you be relaxed when you are ashamed? Well, this passage is designed to help you relax and get rid of your guilt complex. If you think you are a spiritual giant that makes Moses or Joshua look like midgets, then you need this study very much. Remember, the Lord has provided for your hopelessness, your pride, your self-righteousness. He has provided for your being ashamed and for all your guilt complex. Long ago he made provision for your every need.

EPHESIANS 1:9 "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:"

"Having made known" and this means God really communicates with us. There was nothing lovely about us losers, but God takes us and makes winners out of us. Ever since Adam and Eve walked in the garden of Eden, God has always communicated with his people. Thousands of years before the Bible was written, God communicated with man. The more of this communication which you hear, and all communication from God is nothing other than Bible doctrine, the more you become self-sustaining. There is absolutely no reason for you to be upset, ashamed, and no excuse for having a guilt complex. Now there is no excuse for Christians to be unstable in their souls--why? Because God has revealed to us all we need to know. And that is precisely what these words mean; "having made known." The word is "ginosko" and it means to make known in such a way that the information has become a part of you. When you really come to understand doctrine, then that truth becomes a soul link instead of a soul kink. "Having made known" is an aorist, active, participle and it refers to the time when the Bible was written. The active voice means that God himself revealed the message. So God communicates through his word. The participle means that this sets a precedent and means that from here on to the end of time the Bible will be his means of communicating to us.

"Unto us" refers to believers in the Church Age. This is the dative of advantage and it means it is to our advantage to have this communication. "Us" is in the plural and this includes every believer in the earth. So you are important to God and this really means "Having made known to us for our advantage."

Please notice "having made known" comes before "hath abounded" which was given us in verse 8. You have to know before you abound.

Now we come to the word "the mystery." The Greek is "musterion" and it means a system of doctrine categorically arranged for a Greek fraternity. They had a purpose for existing and only the people on the inside of the fraternity understood the secrets, but the people outside did not know the doctrine. Now in the New Testament "the mystery" is the sum total of the information concerning the Church Age never before revealed. Here it is expressed as the mystery of his will. Here he is talking about that part of the mystery which refers to God's will in your life. First you believe and then day by day you add doctrinal content to your belief. As you learn Bible doctrine, you move away from being ashamed, you have inner happiness, and a relaxed mental attitude. When your mind is filled with doctrine and you have the filling of the Holy Spirit, then you grow into the likeness of Christ. You cannot learn the will of God for your life apart from learning the Word of God. Then you can know his will and have inner peace.

"According to his good pleasure" means according to the norm or standard of his good pleasure. So it is a pleasure of God to bless you. It is difficult to bless the sinful human race, but God had found a way to do it. But God doesn't find pleasure in our instability. Enoch is only mentioned twice in the Bible, in Genesis and in Hebrews. God took him out of this world as a memorial to a principle. He could take in doctrine in a fantastic way, and God just took him to be with him. The greatest happiness you can give to God is to take in his Word and live by his Word. Make taking in his Word daily as important as breathing and everything else in your life will fall into its proper place. Had it ever occurred to you that you ought to give God a little pleasure? "Which he hath purposed" is from "protithemi." It means to put something before, to pre-design. Before anything existed, he planned salvation and doctrine and it was all for the purpose of blessing us. Back in verse 3 we read, "Who hath blessed us" and he does it with no strings

attached. His plan calls for peace and pleasure and purpose. There is no pleasure in discipline, but there is real pleasure in giving. (I have always found it was a pleasure to give things to my son--but God has far greater pleasure in giving things to us.)

God has unlimited resources and he can bless us and keep on blessing us and his supply is never diminished. His "money clip" is inexhaustible. But when you learn Bible doctrine and live by it, then that gives God maximum pleasure. So this really reads, "Which he has pre-designed in Christ." The link between God the Father and you is Jesus Christ. We think of Galatians 3:26 "For we are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." So you can go around and be a pauper if you want to but it is not necessary. It's all there and we are to go to the well and drink--go to the cupboard and get the goodies he has provided for us. So face up to this question--in the days ahead are you going to take it or leave it?

EPHESIANS 1:10 "That 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:" The key to this chapter is one word--"pro orizo" and it means to design beforehand. God designed a plan for your life. If you are alive and you are a believer, just remember that God has a plan for you. He didn't do this hurriedly and it wasn't an after thought with God. The plan was perfect and God knows how to carry it out perfectly. God does a perfect job for imperfect people. Now many times men try to get in on the plan and do some of the work themselves. We often try to help God and he doesn't need our help in redemption. Now if you get discouraged and think you have failed just forget it, for God has made provision for your every need and no failure of yours can throw God off the track and keep him from blessing you.

"That" introduces a purpose clause. "Dispensation" is the word used for a period of time. Here it is referring to that dispensation we call the Church Age. It began on the Day of Pentecost and will end the day the rapture of the church takes place. The word for dispensation is "oikonomia" and it literally means the administrator of a household. The real meaning of this word takes us back to an agricultural era and it means the administration of a business and it came to be called "dispensation." Dispensations simply means the eras of time or history whereby God administers the affairs of the world. First was the dispensation of the Gentiles, then came the dispensation of the Jews, and then came the dispensation of the church, and that is the era of time in which we are now living. This third dispensation called "The Church Age" is different from any other era in that every believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation. Every believer is also in union with Christ and every believer is a priest and is an ambassador. Two members of the Trinity indwell every Christian, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Christ indwells the Christian for the purpose of fellowship and the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian for the purpose of function and power and guidance. Instruction for living in the Church Age is given us in writing. But the Church Age isn't the dispensation of "the fullness of time." The word for "times" here is "kairos" and it means an epoch. The word "chronos" refers to one event that happens one after the other. "Kairos" takes a group of events and puts them all together. It is a cluster of events.

We have often studied the four epochs of history--

1. The age of the Gentiles--from Adam to Abraham.
2. The age of Israel--from Abraham to Christ.
3. The age of the church--from Pentecost to the rapture of the church.
4. The Millennial reign of Christ--lasts for 1,000 years.

Now "the fullness of times" is a future epoch when Christ will reign on the earth. Then, for the first and only time in history, all poverty will be completely abolished. War will be abolished by Christ and he is the only one who can bring peace. Capitalism will be the system of economy. Capital punishment will be used, so crime will be at a minimum. Passages like Isaiah 11:6-9 will be fulfilled when Christ reigns. That is the dispensation called here in our verse "the fullness of times." And that is also the last dispensation. Human history began with perfect environment and it will end with perfect environment. But remember, perfect environment did not solve man's problems in the beginning, so neither will it solve man's problems in the end. The only thing that will solve man's problems is regeneration. That is why Jesus said, "Ye must be born again."

Now what is God going to do in that last epoch, "the fullness of times" that he does not do in any other epoch? As we answer this question, keep in mind that God pre-designed epochs and dispensations just like he pre-designed to care for our every need. The answer to that question is found in the words "that he might bring together" and the word is anakethalaioo. "Ana" means again and "kethalaioo" means the sum total, the conclusion, the head. So this word came to mean to bring together several things under one head. All saints will be brought together in one group. We have the word here "in Christ." So it means bringing together the dead in Christ, Old Testament saints, also all living believers, and they are all brought together under the command of Christ. In eternity past God designed the plan and Christ is the focal point of the plan and everything depends on the person of Christ. Salvation, the life of the believer in time, the living of the Christian life, our receiving a resurrection body and our life with him forever all depends on Jesus Christ. He is the focal point of God's plan.

So you see, you just can't afford to ignore or by-pass Jesus Christ. Remember, everything in eternity depends on Jesus Christ. Christ is absent in the church age, but that makes no difference for he has left us the Bible, which is the mind of Christ. So when we keep Christ central, everything else falls into place. All details of life, all circumstances can be kept into proper perspective when Christ is central. So when doctrine is the most important thing in life then we can enjoy the details of life. But when circumstances change and the details of life change we are still supremely happy because we are living by Bible doctrine, and this means inner peace and happiness.

Misery is built on misery. Remember, you can't build your happiness on the unhappiness of someone else. We work up our own misery with mental attitude sins. Events do not make one miserable, it is rather the mental attitude you have in approaching those events. So what is the point here? Just this--if you have a stable mental attitude, you can face any kind of disaster and disappointment and still be happy. God has given the design and the answer for every event in your life, and that answer is in Bible doctrine. So Christ is going to gather together every born again person of all history and they will all recognize the fact that the whole plan centers in Christ.

Now in eternity past he set up for us a trust fund--and the name of it is "inheritance" and this is the key word in verse 11.

EPHESIANS 1:11 "In 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:" "In whom" is a relative pronoun and it refers to Christ. "Pleroo" is the verb and this is our trust fund. It really means he has provided for us, and even though we go up and down, and are on today and off tomorrow, he has provided a stabilized inheritance for us that is adequate under any kind of situation. So I will translate this passage this way--In Jesus Christ, God the Father has provided us a perfect trust fund. This is an aorist tense, so it means it was done in a point of time in eternity past. It is passive voice, and this means we received this provision from God and didn't earn it ourselves. The indicative mood means the reality of the trust fund and it is here to stay. There is no way, after we are in the plan, to ever break the inheritance or the trust fund. We go up and down, we go from hot to cold, but his faithfulness remains the same. That's why we sing--

"Change and decay in all around I see,
O thou who changest not, abide with me."

The instability of man is replaced by the perfect stability of Jesus Christ. This permanent trust fund is a permanent inheritance and no power or force in all the earth can take it away from us. So here is "pro orizo" just exactly like we had it in verse 5. He knew our every failure and our every weakness, yet he designed a plan so perfect and so lasting and adequate that it would care for our every need throughout life and then throughout all eternity.

Now God didn't pre-design this plan and put us in it. But he pre-designed a book and put the plan in full outline in that Book, and we call it the Bible.

According to the "purpose" and the word for purpose is "prothesis." Everything in the plan was perfectly worked out before the plan was put in operation. It is all available, but he won't violate your free will and shove it on you. If you go negative, he won't force it on you. "Of him" here should read "from Him." The words "who worketh" is from "energeo" and it means to put something into operation, the word from which we get energy.

So there it is, all provided, and ready to go--but it all depends on your willingness to accept it. The "counsel" here actually refers to the minutes of the meeting, and this is the will of God. "Thelema" is the word used here for the will of God, and it means the plan which gives God great pleasure.

EPHESIANS 1:12 "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." This means "That we should keep on being in a stabilized status." "Praise of his glory" means that God gets all the glory and credit. "Who first trusted in Christ" is from "proelpizo" and it means confidence. So we can have confidence in doctrine even before we learn it. This is a motivating verb and it motivates us to have confidence in doctrine even before we know it or learn it.