

God's Glorious Church

His Eternal Purpose

"Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy... to present her to Himself as a glorious church." Ephesians 5:25-27

The Bible uses several terms to describe the church: the city of God, the temple of the Spirit, and the body of Christ. However, the "bride of Christ" may best describe the divine relationship God is preparing the church to have with His Son. This divine union is the eternal purpose of God the Father. It was in God's heart from before time to obtain a bride and holy companion for His Son. The apostle Paul knew God's desire when he declared, "I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2)." It was also God's intent to reveal His divine power and wisdom through the church. Paul said that God's grace was given to him "to bring to light... the mystery, which for ages was hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known *through the church* to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, *according to His eternal purpose* which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:9-11)."

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, God's eternal purpose for man is evident. In the Book of Genesis, we see God created Adam in His image to have fellowship with man and to have man rule over the earth (Genesis 2:27-28; 3:8). But instead of preserving his friendship with God and his dominion over the earth, Adam disobeyed God and fell under Satan's domain. Adam's rebellion against God affected all mankind and the entire human race inherited his sinful spiritual nature (Romans 5:19). Yet despite Adam's fall, God did not change His divine plan. At the right time, God sent His Son, born as a man, to destroy Satan's power and restore mankind to Himself. Jesus Christ came to earth with one overriding mission - to die on the cross in order to rescue us from Satan's rule and

reconcile us to God (Colossians 1:13-22). Christ's crucifixion is, therefore, the most momentous event in history and the triumph of the ages. Through His death on the cross, Jesus Christ redeemed us from both the penalty of sin and the power of sin. On the cross, Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath for our sin so we might drink His cup of salvation. God used the death of His only Son to perform a divine heart transplant and save us from certain doom. When Jesus died on the cross, God exchanged our terminally sick heart with His Son's divine heart (Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:11-3:4). God then raised Jesus Christ from the dead and exalted Him as the eternal King of glory (Philippians 2:9-11). Therefore, God included us in His Son's death so that His risen Son might sovereignly live in us (Romans 6:5; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27).

From His Son's death and resurrection, God has created a people in His Son's image - the body of Christ, the church, who is destined to fulfill His eternal purpose (Romans 8:29-30). What Adam lost for mankind by his disobedience, Christ regained for us by His obedience to the death. For as a husband loves his wife, Christ loved the church and gave His life for her. Just as Eve was created from Adam's body to be his bride and glory, God created the church from Christ's body to be His bride and glory. And as Eve was created as Adam's helpmate to reign over the earth, God created the church as Christ's helpmate to reign with Him in the age to come.

By the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ destroyed Satan's power to keep us captive to sin and death (Colossians 2:10; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8). However, the church has, in the past, chiefly failed to enforce Christ's victory because she has tried to do, in the power of her soul, what she can only do through the power of Christ's death and resurrection. "And they overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death (Revelation 12:11)." The blood speaks of the triumphant work that Christ has accomplished by His

crucifixion. When the church knows (and acts on) the divine truth that she has died with Christ, the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against her. When the church realizes she no longer has a sinful nature inherited from Adam and she is a holy new creation in Christ, she will not only vanquish Satan, she will fulfill her eternal destiny. "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down (Revelation 12:10)." When the church puts no confidence in her natural morality and ability and by faith trusts solely in Christ to overcome through her, she will be ready to reign with Him (Philippians 3:3). "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready (Revelation 19:6-7)." Under the Old Covenant, when Solomon completed building God's temple, the glory of God filled the temple, which was His house (2 Chronicles 7:2). Now, under the New Covenant, when the Holy Spirit has completed building the body of Christ into God's temple, the glory of God will once again fill His house, which is the church (Ephesians 2:19-22). "'And the latter glory of this house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord (Haggai 2:9)."

God's divine plan is to have an eternal companion and co-regent worthy for His Son and a heavenly family for Himself. God chose the church for this purpose before the foundation of the world. He birthed the church from out of His Son's death and He will glorify His risen Son through the church. When the church has fulfilled God's mission of ushering in His kingdom, Christ our King will return and crush Satan under His feet. Then the bride of Christ, the glorious church, will eternally reign with her divine Lover and Lord, the Lamb of God.

"To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."
Ephesians 3:21