

God's Purpose—The Living and Organic Body of Christ

God's purpose is not centered on individuals who are desperately seeking fulfillment for themselves in life and rewards for themselves in eternity. God's purpose is focused on *God* and on God's will, God's intention, God's economy, and God's good pleasure as revealed in Ephesians 1. God's good pleasure is intimately related to Christ, to the church, to the divine sonship, and to God's working Himself in Christ into His chosen people. The church is the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all. It is God's good pleasure to produce and build up the church as the living, organic Body of Christ, the universal fullness of Christ, by dispensing the divine life into the believers.

In order to know the eternal purpose of God, we need wisdom, revelation, and enlightenment, because the purpose of God is a mystery. The purpose that He purposed in Himself is spoken of as the mystery of His will, because the Triune God Himself is a mystery. The economical manifestation of the Triune God in time is a reality, but seeing and apprehending this mystery require revelation, which issues in a ministry that makes known the mystery of God's desire to expand His organic incorporation into redeemed and regenerated humanity in order to produce the Body of Christ. The ministry not only makes known the mystery; it also imparts the contents of the mystery and enables the members of the Body to participate in the work of ministry unto the building up of the Body in love. All the elements that are intrinsically related to knowing and participating in the purpose of God are presented in Matthew 16, which speaks of the presence of mystery, the need for revelation, and the reality of organic incorporation that is demonstrated and extended into the church as the Body of Christ through ministry.

The church that the Lord will build is the house of God, which is the fulfillment of Jacob's dream and which is built as we are replaced with Christ by enjoying Him. Christ is the reality of God's eternal purpose, the reality of Bethel, the church as the house of God. When Christ was incarnated, He was the reality of the house of God, the temple of God, having God as His content. When Christ was resurrected, His crucified physical body was resurrected to become the divine and mystical Body of Christ, the enlarged reality of the temple of God. We are growing into a holy temple in the Lord by being built

together into a dwelling place of God in spirit. When we turn to our spirit, exercise our spirit, worship in our spirit, and live in our spirit, we are living in Christ as the house of God and growing up into the corporate house of God. In order to become the reality of Bethel, the house of God, we need to enjoy Christ as our all-inclusive universal replacement so that He can transform us into living and precious stones for God's building. In the New Testament, Christ can replace us, because we are grafted into Him. Our spirit has been joined to and grafted into the Lord Spirit to become one mingled spirit. When we live and walk by the Spirit according to our spirit, and when we serve by the Spirit in our spirit, Christ replaces us to live and serve through us for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose.

This living and serving is a source of rest to God because God obtains a corporate man in His image and likeness who can rule for Him on this earth. The commission of the church, as this corporate man, is to testify the salvation of Christ and to testify the triumph of Christ. On the one hand, the church brings benefit to man, and on the other hand, it causes Satan to suffer loss. When the building up of the church is accomplished, and God's multifarious wisdom is displayed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies, the Triune God will find rest in the church.

The concept of the Christian life that many believers today hold to and live by is shallow and commonplace, portraying the believer as someone who lives and acts in a purely ethical realm and who faintly represents God somehow. But the writers of the New Testament speak of the believers in an altogether mystical way, describing them as the very extension of the incorporation that Christ was when He was on the earth in the flesh. In the view of the New Testament writers the believers are not independent ethical agents of God on earth, representing Him to a world that is inferior to them in demeanor and behavior. Rather, the believers are to live, act, and even exist by the operations of the Divine Trinity within them. May we all be motivated to live not according to mere human, Christian, and even godly principles but by the same incorporation of the Triune God in our own living and work. **AC**

by the Editors