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GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

Have you ever considered carefully the opening words of the Bible? *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* Why doesn't it simply say that God created the universe? Why the *heaven* and the *earth*?

As we go on reading we find the answer to this question, for the Bible clearly teaches that God has a **twofold** purpose; one having to do with **the earth** and the other with **heaven**. The former is the subject of **prophecy**, while the latter is the subject of **“the mystery”**, or secret, revealed to and through the apostle Paul.

When it comes to **prophecy**, 2 Peter 1:16-19 teaches us: *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:”

But when it comes to **the mystery**, Ephesians 3:8-12 teaches us: *“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; and 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: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”*

The former concerns **Israel and the nations**, the latter **“the Body of Christ”**, the Church of the heavenly calling.

Some people are surprised to learn that there is not one promise in the whole 'Old Testament' about going to heaven. There the whole outlook is earthly, with Messiah reigning as King: *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a Kind shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”* (Jeremiah 23:5).

When our Lord appeared in the flesh the angels proclaimed **“on earth peace”** (Luke 2:14). He Himself said that **“the meek”** should **“inherit the earth”** (Matthew 5:5). He taught His disciples to pray: *“Thy will be done **in earth**, as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). Even at Pentecost Peter declared that after the **“restitution of all things”** God would send Jesus back to earth and the times of refreshing would **“come from the presence of the Lord”** (Acts 3:19-21).

Not until the raising up of Paul do we learn that now all believers in Christ are “baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13), and Colossians 1:5 and many other Pauline passages speak of “the hope which is laid up for you **in heaven.**” Before God believers in Christ are already given a position “**in heavenly places**” and are blessed “with all spiritual blessings **in heavenly [places]** in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3, 2:4-7).

The prophecies regarding the kingdom, however, will still be fulfilled and Christ will reign on earth and bring the promised “times of refreshing”. Thank God, this world will not forever be a place of war and bloodshed, misery and woe. At that time, heaven and earth will be opened to each other, and thus will be fulfilled God’s **twofold** purpose: “...*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.*” (Ephesians 1:9,10).

(Source: 'Two Minutes with the Bible, January 25' by Cornelius R. Stam)