

THE WILL OF GOD, Week 1

Life The Mystery of God's Will in the Universe Ultimately Being to Head up All Things in Christ though the Church as the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:5, 9-11; 3:11; 5:17; Col. 1:9; Rev. 4:11; 21:1-2, 9-11

Ephesians 1:5	Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will ,
Ephesians 1:9	Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself ,
Ephesians 1:10	Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ , the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
Ephesians 1:11	In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will ,
Ephesians 3:11	According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,
Ephesians 5:17	Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is .
Colossians 1:9	Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
Revelation 4:11	You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created.
Revelation 21:1	And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.
Revelation 21:2	And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
Revelation 21:9	And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.
Revelation 21:10	And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
Revelation 21:11	Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE HAVING BEEN PURPOSED BY GOD

God's good pleasure has been purposed by God in Himself. This means that **God Himself** is the **initiation**, **origination**, and **sphere** of His eternal purpose. God has a plan, a desire, and according to His plan, He has a purpose. The existence of the universe is according to God's purpose. Heaven, earth, millions of items, and the human race are all according to God's purposed desire. Eventually, all these things will issue in God's desire. In the universe there is a desire, **God's desire**. Because this desire has been purposed by God, **no one and nothing can overthrow it**. Everything that takes place on earth is for this purpose. We, the sons of God, in whom God's grace abounds, are the focal point of His purpose, and everything is working for us. **God has purposed this desire in Himself. He did not take counsel with anyone else regarding it.**

God's good pleasure is what He has purposed in Himself for an administration (v. 10). The entire universe will eventually be under one administration. The Greek word rendered "administration" is *oikonomia*, from which we get the English word economy. **God has purposed to have an economy**. All the kingdoms in the universe—the angelic kingdom, the demonic kingdom, the human kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the plant kingdom—are for this economy, this administration, and are moving toward it. For example, today's world situation, the center of which is the Middle East, is according to the Bible. Since the reformation of the nation of Israel in 1948 and especially since the return of Jerusalem to Israel in 1967, the Middle East has become the center of international relations. This is altogether according to the Bible, **and it is a sign that the universe is moving toward God's administration**. Such an administration is what God has planned and purposed according to His desire. **All the kingdoms will be under this unique administration, which is to head up all things in Christ.**

At present, the universe is in a **state of collapse**. Instead of being headed up, it is a heap. The collapse was brought about through two **rebellions**, Satan's rebellion and Adam's rebellion. Before the creation of the human race, God made an archangel, who later became Satan, the head of all creatures. But that archangel rebelled against God. Then God created the human race and made Adam the head of all created things. According to Genesis 1, God put all things created by Him under Adam. This indicates that Adam was the head. Adam, however, was seduced to rebel against God. Thus, by the angelic rebellion and the human rebellion, the universe collapsed into a heap. This is the reason that today's human society and creation itself are such a mess. Everywhere there is nothing but rebellion. Even the mosquitoes are rebellious against man. This illustrates the fact **that the universe is filled with the fighting caused by rebellion**. Nevertheless, **God has purposed to bring in His administration to head up all things in Christ.**

At this point, we need to ask a question: Does the body support the head or does the head uphold the body? The answer is that the **head upholds the body**. This is proved by the fact that if a person's head is cut off, the body falls to the ground. Hence, the body is upheld by the head. In like manner, the **church life is a life of being headed up**. If we truly want to have a glorious church, **we must be willing to be headed up**. All around us, at school, at work, and in the government, we see nothing but a state of collapse; nothing is headed up. But in the **proper church life** we are being headed up. This heading up in the church life is the beginning of God's heading up of all things. Under Christ and through the church, God will head up all things in the universe. This is the mystery of God's will. Ultimately, the mystery of God's will in the universe is to head up all things in Christ.

(Life-Study of Ephesians, chapter 7, section 2)

Day 1

I. We need to **understand** what the **will of the Lord** is—Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9.

II. God's will is **what He wants** and **what He intends to accomplish**—Eph. 1:5, 9, 11:

- A. God has an **eternal will**, which is the **source of His eternal purpose**—v. 11; 3:11.
- B. Since God is eternal, without beginning or ending, **His will is also eternal**; it lies at the heart of the origin of the universe—Rev. 4:11.
- C. God created all things for His will so that He might **accomplish and fulfill His purpose**—Eph. 3:11.
- D. The **will of God** is **concentrated in Christ** and is for Christ to have the first place in all things; Christ is everything in God's eternal will—Col. 1:15-18; 3:4, 10-11.
- E. God wants to have Christ with the church; the **will of God** is to **obtain the church as the Body of Christ**—Eph. 5:32; 1:9, 22-23; 2:21-22; 4:16.
- F. **God in Christ as the Spirit is now working within us to accomplish His eternal will to have the New Jerusalem**—the wife of the Lamb filled with the glory of God for His eternal expression in the new heaven and new earth—Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:14-21; Rev. 21:1-2, 9-11.

Day 2

III. According to the good pleasure of His will, **God predestinated us unto sonship**—Eph. 1:5:

- A. God has a will, in which is **His good pleasure**; **God's good pleasure is of His will and is embodied in His will**, so His will comes first—vv. 5, 9, 11.
- B. **God's good pleasure is what makes God happy—it is the desire of His heart**; the living, loving, and purposeful God surely has a heart's desire—v. 5.
- C. **God predestinated us** to be His sons **according to His pleasure, according to the desire of His heart**—v. 5:
 - 1. Before the foundation of the world, **God chose us to be holy**; to be made holy—to be sanctified by God through His dispensing Himself into us and then mingling His nature with us—is the process, the procedure—v. 4.
 - 2. **To be sons of God** is the aim, the goal, and is a matter of our **being joined to the Son of God** and conformed **to the image of the firstborn Son of God** so that our whole being may be "sonized" by God—v. 5; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15.

IV. We have been "**predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will**"—Eph. 1:11:

- A. **God's will** is His intention, and **God's counsel** is **His consideration of the way to accomplish His will**, His intention.
- B. According to His will, **a council was held by the Trinity** before the foundation of the world to make a **counsel**, a decision, which is His determined will—1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:11.

V. God's will was hidden in Him as a **mystery**, so Ephesians 1:9 speaks of "**the mystery of His will**":

- A. In eternity God had a will, but this will was hidden in Him; hence, it was a mystery—v. 9; 3:3-5, 9.
- B. In the pleasure of His heart and in His wisdom and prudence, **God made this hidden mystery known to us through His revelation in Christ**, that is, through Christ's **incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension**—1:9; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3-4; 4:25; 8:3, 34.

Day 3

VI. Ultimately, God's will in the universe is to **head up all things in Christ through the church as the Body of Christ**—Eph. 1:10, 22-23; Rev. 21:1-2:

- A. **God's eternal intention** is, in the economy of the fullness of the times, **to head up all things in Christ**, who has been appointed to be the universal Head—Eph. 1:10, 22.
- B. Through the dispensations of God in all the ages, **all things will be headed up in Christ in the new heaven and new earth**; this will be God's eternal administration and economy—Rev. 21:1-2.
- C. Satan's goal is to **corrupt God's creation** and to **cause confusion**—Rom. 8:19-23:
 - 1. The entire universe is a **heap of collapse** caused by Satan injecting himself as the factor of death into God's creation—Heb. 2:14; Rom. 8:20-21.
 - 2. God is working to **liberate His creation from bondage** and to **bring it into liberty** by heading up all things in Christ—Eph. 1:22, 10.
 - 3. **We all need to be delivered from the heap of collapse and headed up in Christ**—Col. 1:12-13.
 - 4. **God's salvation is to save us** not only from our fallen, sinful condition but also **from the heap of collapse**—vv. 12-13; Eph. 2:1-8, 21-22.
- D. God will subject all things under Christ by heading up all things in Christ **through the church as the Body of Christ**—1 Cor. 15:20-28:

1. God is heading up His chosen ones to be the **Body of Christ with Christ as the Head**—Eph. 1:4, 22-23:
 - a. Christ's headship is being transmitted to the church; this means that, **in a sense**, we **can share the headship of Christ over all things**.
 - b. **The church is under nothing but Christ Himself**; we are above everything else because we are the Body of the One who is over all things.
 - c. The first step in the **heading up of all things in Christ** is for God to bring **His chosen ones, His sons, out of the universal collapse and to place them under the headship of Christ**—v. 22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19.
2. When the church takes the lead to be headed up in Christ, **God has a way to head up all other things**—Eph. 1:22-23, 10:
 - a. The **church is the vessel used by God** to solve His problems and to fulfill His purpose, which is to manifest Himself through man by mingling Himself with man—3:9-11.b. Eventually, the **Body with Christ as the Head will be the universal Head over all things**—1:22-23.

Day 4

3. The church life is a **life of being headed up**—4:15; 1 Cor. 11:3:
 - a. In the **proper church life** we are being headed up in Christ.
 - b. If we do not know what it is to be headed up in Christ, we cannot know the church.
 - c. In the church life **we are taking the lead** to be headed up in Christ; for this **we need to grow in life**—Eph. 4:15.

Day 5

- d. We are headed up through the **divine dispensing**—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 1:1; 3:2, 9, 16-17.
- e. God is working Himself into His chosen and redeemed ones **through an administration that is a sweet dispensing, an intimate stewardship, a comfortable household arrangement**—1:10; 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15.

Day 6

- E. The heading up in the church life is by **life and light**—John 1:4; 8:12:
 1. **God's way of recovery** is Christ versus Satan, life versus death, light versus darkness, and order versus confusion.
 2. The collapse comes from the factor of death; the **heading up comes from the factor of life**—Ezek. 37:4-10.
 3. God's way to **recover the oneness** among His creation is to **impart Himself into us as life**—Rom. 8:6, 10-11, 19-21.
 4. In order to be delivered from the heap of collapse in a practical way, **we need to grow in life**; the more we grow in life, the more we will be headed up and the more we will be rescued from the universal collapse—Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19.
 5. When God comes into us as **life**, the **light of life shines within us**—John 1:4; Eph. 5:8-9:
 - a. This **life swallows death**, and this **light dispels the darkness**—John 8:12.
 - b. If we are in the **life** and under the **light**, **we will be delivered out of confusion and brought into order, harmony, and oneness**.
- F. In the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, **all things will be headed up in Christ**; this will be the complete fulfillment of Ephesians 1:10—Rev. 21:2-3, 23-25; 22:1-2a:
 1. In the **New Jerusalem** everything will be **saturated with life and will be under light**—v. 1; 21:23.
 2. In Revelation 21 we see the **Head**, the **Body** surrounding the Head, and all the nations walking in the **light of the city**; the whole universe will be headed up in the light shown through the transparent city—v. 18.

The Heading Up of All Things

In Ephesians 1:10 Paul says, “*Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.*” We need to note that it is in Christ that God intends to head up all things. The word Christ here literally means “the Christ”; it refers to the One mentioned in verse 1 and verse 3, the One in whom are the spiritual blessings of God and in whom are the faithful saints, who participate in the blessings. He is a particular One; hence, He is called “the Christ.”

The Greek word rendered economy in verse 10 is *oikonomia*, which means “*house law, household management or administration, and derivatively, administrative dispensation, plan, or economy.*” **The economy that God, according to His desire, planned and purposed in Himself is to head up all things in Christ at the fullness of the times.** This is accomplished through the dispensing of the abundant life supply of the Triune God as the life factor into all the members of the church that they may rise up from the death situation and be attached to the Body.

The expression the times in verse 10 refers to the ages. The fullness of the times will be when the new heaven and new earth appear after all the dispensations of God in all the ages have been completed. Altogether there are four ages: the age of sin (Adam), the age of the law (Moses), the age of grace (Christ), and the age of the kingdom (the millennium).

God’s eternal intention is to head up all things in Christ, who has been appointed to be the universal Head. Through all the dispensations of God in all the ages, **all things will be headed up in Christ in the new heaven and new earth.** That will be God’s eternal administration and economy. Thus, the heading up of all things is the issue of all the items covered in verses 3 through 9. God chose us to be holy, predestinated us unto sonship, accomplished redemption for us through the blood of Christ, graced us in the Beloved, and caused grace to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence in order that He may head up all things in Christ.

Ephesians 1:22 says that God gave Christ to be Head over all things. This reveals that the heading up of all things is to the church so that the Body of Christ may share in all that is of Christ as the Head, having been rescued from the heap of the universal collapse in death and darkness, which was caused by the rebellion of the angels and the rebellion of man. In Christ God is in the process of heading up all things in heaven and on earth. However, without the church as the Body to match Christ as the Head, it will not be possible for God to head up all things in Christ. **The heading up of all things is accomplished by the Head, but it cannot be accomplished without a Body for the Head.** Whether Christ can be the Head over all things, whether all things can be subjected to the authority of Christ, and whether all things can be headed up in Christ completely **depend upon whether or not the church has been produced and has grown up** (4:14-16; Col. 2:19). When the church is fully grown, God is able to subject all things to the authority of Christ. By means of the church, Christ is able to be the Head over all things. Eventually, the Body with Christ as the Head will be the universal Head over all things. **When everything is headed up in Christ, there will be absolute peace and harmony** (Isa. 2:4; 11:6; 55:12; Psa. 96:12-13), **a full rescue out of the collapse.** This will begin from the time of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).

When God created the universe, everything of the universe was in oneness; all things in it were in harmony, not in chaos. God and the universe were in harmony. This harmony is the great oneness of the universe. All things related to the universe depend on God, who is one, as the factor of their oneness. **The center of the universe is God Himself; hence, the oneness of the universe is God Himself.** There was oneness in the creation of the universe, and in this oneness there was no confusion. Yet because of Satan’s **rebellion**, which was followed by man’s fall, this original oneness in creation was ruined so that the entire universe was brought into **confusion**. Satan damaged the oneness of the universe in creation by introducing death into all creation, which death severed the Creator’s relationship with creation. In other words, when Satan brought death into the universe, the universe was separated from God and the oneness of the universe was lost. Thus, there is not the full harmony in the universe.

Yet God had an eternal plan to head up all things in Christ, that is, to make Christ the Head of all things and the Head above all things. God’s way to recover the oneness among His creation is to impart Himself in Christ into us as life (Rom. 8:6, 10-11, 19-21). The Triune God as life brings in light, and light issues in harmony and brings all things into oneness. Hence, the believers participate in this heading up by **growing in life**, by being **headed up in the proper church life**, and by **living under Christ’s light** (John 1:4; Rev. 21:23-25). The more we grow in life, the more we will be headed up and the more we will be rescued from the universal collapse (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19). This process of heading up all things in Christ is still **continuing**, and the heading up of all things will be fully accomplished and manifested when Christ finishes His work to bring forth the new creation out of the old creation through all the dispensations of God. It is through this new creation that Christ will head up all creation and bring it into the universal oneness; this will issue in the new heaven and the new earth. In the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, all things will be headed up in Christ; this will be the complete fulfillment of the heading up of all things spoken of in Ephesians 1:10. In Revelation 21 we see the Head, the Body surrounding the Head, and all the nations walking in the light of the city. The whole universe will be headed up in the light shown through the transparent city (v. 18).

(The Conclusion of the New Testament (Msgs. 323-345), chapter 11, section 3)