

God's Eternal Purpose

by F.T. Wright

This article appeared in *The Messenger of Living Righteousness*, May 1967. It was one of the first articles to suggest that Christ's role and nature as the connector between God and man, was simply an extension of His nature and role as it had existed between God and angels in heaven. Later, this understanding grew, and was further developed in the study on Melchizedek (1970), the booklet *The Living and the Dead* (1981), and finally, in the studies on Angels and the role of Gabriel (1991).

Ephesians 3

⁸ 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;

⁹ And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

¹¹ According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul here very plainly states that God's purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus is an eternal purpose. A moments reflection will plainly reveal to us that the word "eternal" must mean eternal in the past as well as eternal in the future.

In other words there never was a time when this purpose was any different from what it now is or was in the days of Paul. It was the same purpose as far back as is possible to go and it will be the same purpose as far forward in time as it is possible to go. There never has been and never can be any change in this eternal purpose of God.

It therefore follows that the coming of Christ to this earth in the incarnation is not something new but only the extension into a new dimension of the same eternal purpose that had been born from eternity. This we will see as we pursue this study through the Word of God to learn what God's eternal purpose was in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We turn now to The Desire of Ages, and there we read this statement,

The Desire of Ages, p. 331:

Heaven is a ceaseless approaching unto God through Christ.

Now please note that this statement says that heaven is a ceaseless approaching unto God through Christ. Therefore God's eternal purpose in Christ in heaven is that all creatures shall forever be drawing nearer and nearer to the Father through Jesus the Intermediary, or the Mediator between God and the Angels.

Now we know that God's eternal purpose in Christ on this earth is that every creature upon this earth shall also be ceaselessly approaching unto God through Jesus Christ. There He stands as the one and only Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. Through Him alone access is to be found to the Father, and through Him the fullest access to the Father can be found.

Now we know that in order for Jesus Christ to act out the role and to fulfill the purpose on this earth whereby all mankind who will, can ceaselessly approach unto God through Him, He must be at the same time both God and man. It was needful that His divine arm encircle the throne of the Infinite, and with His human arm He reached down and became one with mankind. In no other way could the eternal purpose of God be fulfilled for mankind. That is the eternal purpose of God's people approaching Himself through Christ.

It therefore follows that if Christ must become truly man and even to have the glory of God in that humanity in order for man to approach unto God through Him, then Jesus must also become truly Angel for Angels to approach through Him.

Can this be so? It is the natural conclusion and just what we would expect to find, and when we do go back and search the Old Testament through, it is a fact that we find that Jesus

is set forth again and again as an Angel. Let us spend a few moments searching with this in mind.

Genesis 32

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

Now here we are told a man wrestled with Jacob, but by comparing it with *Hosea* 12:3, 4, we are distinctly told that this man was an angel, and bear in mind it does not say God in the form of an angel but it says “an angel.”

Hosea 12

³ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God;

⁴ Yes, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him; he found him in Bethel, and there he spoke with us; even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial.

In verse 3 we are told that “by his strength he had power with God.” In verse 4 “Yes, he had power over the angel.” And so we see that at the same time he had power over God and an Angel, and both God and the Angel were the one person, Jesus Christ.

This is verified by another reference:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 197:

It was Christ the Angel of the covenant who had revealed himself to Jacob.

This then removes any doubt as to the fact that Jacob had power over God and the Angel, that this was in the one person, Jesus Christ who was right there was both God and Angel.

The limitations of this article do not permit us to trace through every instance of Christ’s revelation in the Old Testament as an Angel of God. If you take your Bible and study it through you will find that Christ Himself was the Angel that appeared to Abraham, to Joshua, to Gideon, and the parents

of Samson.

You will find too that He is referred to as the Angel of the Covenant, the Angel of God's Presence, the Angel in whom was God's name, the Angel that led Israel in the wilderness and out of Egypt. He is the Mighty Angel that instructed John, and the Mighty Angel of *Revelation* 10. He is the Angel who went before Israel in the wilderness. He is also called the "Arch-angel".

All these titles which I have just quoted are found in numerous references to Him in the writings of Ellen White. In Vol. 1, and page 468 of the *Index to the Spirit of Prophecy*, you will find the complete listing of all the references that so reveal Christ as the Angel of God.

Now just as Christ became truly man in order to reach man where he was, so He had become truly Angel in order to reach Angels where they were and supply to them the channel, or the means of eternal access unto the Father.

It is evident that by virtue of His infinite power and greatness God is so far removed from His creatures that such a means of their coming into a close relationship to Him was necessary. Thus the incarnation is not something new.

The incarnation is God's eternal purpose in Jesus Christ, and far back there in the dim recesses of eternity in the past, Jesus stepped down into the form of an angel and thereby He might render loving service to the angel hosts with His Angelic arm encircling them and with His Divine arm encircling the throne of the Omnipotent.

Then when the time came when the need demanded it, He took one step further in this same eternal purpose and came on down to become man with man, that thus He might encircle mankind with His human arm and with His divine arm encircle the throne of the Infinite.

This brings to view a very important aspect of the failure

of the devil in heaven to understand who Jesus was. It must be borne in mind that the great controversy is between Christ and Satan. True it is also between Satan and God, but it is against Christ that Satan is leveling his attacks. It is very interesting to learn that

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 973:

Satan declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command but God's commands alone will he obey.

Now Satan had said that he would obey God but not Christ; we understand that to obey one is to obey the other because Christ is God. How could it be then that Satan should so misrepresent and misunderstand that Christ was God?

To understand this better lets turn to the situation on this earth when men did not understand Christ in His humanity. In *Matthew 16* we find there Jesus asking the question of His disciples "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man am?" Observe carefully that Jesus said "whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Now their answer reveals that there was no doubt or question in the minds of people around them of the humanity of Christ.

Matthew 16

¹⁴ Some say that you are John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

Thus there was no question about His humanity. They could see that He was a man, plain, simple as they were, having the same needs and all the encumbrances that fettered the human being. And so Christ pursued the question, "But whom do you say that I am?" Their answer reveals that they had discerned God in Christ because Peter said "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Now Peter's answer revealed that he understood the incarnation of Christ. He said "You" that is the Son of man, "are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." In other words he discerned both the divinity and the humanity of the Son of God.

He saw that He was God and man.

But the people of that day did not discern this, they could not see this. They saw in Him only a man. Certainly they recognized Him to be an extraordinary man but nothing more than a man, so that when they crucified Jesus Christ they did not know and did not understand that they were crucifying God. This gives point and meaning to Christ's prayer, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

They did not know because to all appearances Jesus was only a man. He looked and walked and talked, so completely human that this was all they could see, and it required an understanding of God's eternal purpose, and the illumination of God's Spirit in their minds to enable them to understand that Jesus was more than just a man, He was God in human flesh.

Likewise in heaven, Jesus was completely an angel and carried with Himself all the appearances of an Angel. But hidden in that Angel form was the glory of God, so that it could not be seen any more than it could be seen in the human form.

So Lucifer in heaven found himself saying,

"Why should this Angel, Jesus Christ, have the pre-eminence over this angel Lucifer? I will not obey another Angel, I will obey only God."

In doing this Lucifer did not know what he was doing. Nonetheless he sinned just as truly as did the pharisees and the scribes that crucified Jesus, but their sin, mark it well, was the exact reproduction and continuation of Lucifer's sin up in heaven.

Thus we see that God's purpose in Jesus Christ is one: eternal in the past, eternal in the future. And the mystery of iniquity in heaven is no different to the working of the mystery of iniquity upon this earth. It is one mystery, it is one rebellion, it is one issue: the controversy between Christ and Satan.

Now in *Ephesians*, Paul speaks about the fellowship of this

mystery, and certainly inasmuch as the whole point and intent and purpose of God's purpose in Jesus Christ is to gather all things into the closest of harmony with Himself, this mystery and the understanding of it, can only result in bringing us into a closer heavenly fellowship.

Heaven and earth are both an eternal approaching unto God through Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator, the one great channel of blessing. Let us learn to look to Him as that channel, and thus save ourselves from the fearful pitfall into which Satan fell, and by falling, caused his eternal ruin.