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**C0450 -- December 29, 2004 – Ephesians 4:7-10 -- Ascension to the High Ground**

Two weeks ago, we looked at Eph. 4:1-6. Chapter 4 begins the Practical outworking the Doctrinal portion of Ephesians in chapters 1-3. This is signified by the word **therefore** at the beginning of 4:1. In other words, Paul is saying, in light of the doctrinal truths that I just taught you, you ought to live the following way. Therefore, Paul begins with an Exhortation toward Unity among believers. The historical event standing behind this exhortation to experiential unity is found in 2:11-15 where the hostility between Jew and Gentile has been abolished through Christ's fulfillment of the Mosaic Law so that there is one new man. Positional unity has been established between believing Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, the exhortation to unity in v. 1 is **to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called**. **Calling** refers to the in-time manifestation of God's before time choice of you. And here Paul is exhorting you with a sense of great urgency to now walk consistently with your calling. I used several word plays to engrain this in your mind: conduct should be consistent with our calling, our life with our lip, our duty with our doctrine, our walk with our talk, works with our words.

Verse 2 gives 3 characteristics that should accompany our walk: *First* in importance Paul places **humility**. **Humility** was the least desired trait in the ancient world but it is first in Christianity. The archetype of **humility** is the Lord Jesus Christ who humbled Himself by taking to Himself human flesh and being obedient, even to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:5-8). We are to follow this model of **humility** by being obedient to God's commandments for the church regardless of the consequences. *Second*, Paul mentions **gentleness**. Once again, the archetype of **gentleness** is the Lord Jesus Christ. The interesting thing was that this word was best exemplified by Jesus cleansing His Father's Temple in John 2:13-16. This is because **gentleness** means "always being angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time." Christ exemplified this when He ran off everyone who was defiling the Temple but stopped at the doves and asked someone to move them. He knew when to be angry and when not to be angry. We are to be **gentle** in this manner, having this kind of self-control. There are times a Christian should be angry, just don't sin

in your anger. *Third*, Paul mentions **patience**, or what we might call longsuffering toward one another. The archetype of **patience** is God Himself. God has put up with the human race for a long time. He's so patient that He's putting off His judgment until the 7-year Tribulation. That's a lot of **patience** toward sinful depraved mankind. We are to be patient with other believers. Some believer may really get on your nerves but you are supposed to put up with him for a long time.

In light of these three characteristics the manner in which we are to compose ourselves is two-fold: 1) **show forbearance to one another in love** and 2) **be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit**. **Showing forbearance** basically means "to endure" one another. It's important that Paul adds **in love**. If he didn't then we might build up anger and resentment as we endured a brother in Christ, but since we must endure **in love** there can be no buildup of anger or resentment. Secondly, we are to **be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit**. This means we are to make every effort to preserve the unity already established by the Spirit. We are not to create unity but we are to **preserve the unity** that the Spirit has created. We are to do this **in the bond of peace**. The **bond** here is **peace** (epexegetical genitive). Christ is our peace (2:14) and all believers are chained to Christ.

In vv. 4-6 Paul gives the Basis of Unity which is the Triune God. v. 4 gives us the unity of the Spirit. **One body** = one universal church, **one Spirit** = the Holy Spirit, **one hope** = the hope of all things being summed up in Christ in the Messianic Kingdom. All believers share this **one body**, **one Spirit** and **one hope**. v. 5 gives us the unity of the Son. Throughout Ephesians the Son is called **Lord**. There is **one Lord** = Son, **one faith** = a common faith in Christ, **one baptism** = identified with Christ in death and resurrection. All believers share **one Lord**, **one faith** and **one baptism**. v. 6 gives us the unity of the Father. There is **one God and Father of all believers**. He is **over all**, meaning He is sovereign. He is **through all**, meaning He is imminent in believers. God works through all believers. Finally, God is **in all** meaning He indwells all believers.

The focus of 4:1-6 was unity. Tonight, we will focus on diversity within this unity. In verses (7-16) Paul is going to develop the means of preserving the unity already established. How are we supposed to preserve unity? The basic answer to preservation of unity is that Christ gave spiritually gifted people to the Church to preserve unity. So, in vv. 1-6 Paul emphasized unity, in vv. 7-10 he stresses diversity and in vv. 11-16 he will turn once more to unity.

### Structure of 4:1-16

<b>4:1-6</b>	<b>Unity</b>
<b>4:7-10</b>	<b>Diversity</b>
<b>4:11-16</b>	<b>Unity</b>

Basically, believing Jews and Gentiles are positionally united in one new man. But this does not always mean that unity is enjoyed experientially. There is often strife and discord among different groups of believers. Therefore, Paul desires that we make every effort to preserve the unity of our position by carrying it over into our experience. Paul wants us to make it a living reality. To do this Christ did something for each of us. This is where the diversity comes in. We are all unified in one new man but we each have a different measure of grace from Christ. So, there is also diversity in the one new man. This reflects the Triune God who is both unity and diversity (1 and 3). In vv. 7-10 Paul speaks about this diversity, and, in particular, Christ's donation of the grace. In vv. 11-16 Paul will show that the purpose of the gifts is not to create diversity but to preserve unity. If these gifted persons are not functioning properly then strife and discord will result. Unfortunately, such is the state of much of Christianity today.

*Greek Text 4:7 eni (adj DSM) de (conj coord) ekasto (adj DSM) hemon (3PPP Gen) edothe (verb 3S AAI) he charis (noun NSF) kata (prep) to metron (noun ASN) tes doreas (noun GSF) tou Christou (noun GSM).*

**Translation 4:7 But to each one of us He gave grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**

*eni de ekasto hemon edothe he charis kata to metron tes doreas tou Christou* “**But to each one of us He gave grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**” In verse 7, Paul uses the words **But to each one of us** to make a contrast with verse 6 which ended with “all”. He is moving from the church universal to the individual. This means that **each one of** you here tonight who are believers in Jesus Christ have been given a **gift of grace** or unmerited favor. “God does not give each Christian the same measure of grace.”<sup>1</sup> Each Christian is given a different amount of grace by which to minister to one another and therefore serve God. Turn back to Ephesians 3:2 to see that Paul also received a measure of God's grace. Turn over to Romans 12:3-8. The point here is that some individual believers are given more grace and others are given less grace. And the measure of grace given to you is to be used in like proportion by you to minister to the body so that the church can be built up. If every believer has been given a measure of grace then every believer is supposed to be doing ministry, not just the leaders in the church. Because God

sovereignly bestows a measure of grace to each believer there should be no jealousy among Christians.

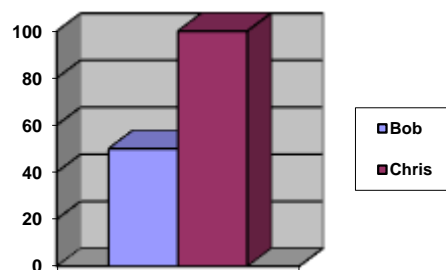
So, while there is a unity among all believers (4:1-6) this does not mean there is uniformity among believers. Unity  $\neq$  uniformity but unity does = harmony. Unity can have diversity within it if the diverse elements are not contradictory and if the diversity re-enforces unity. So, all believers form one unit that is composed of many diverse parts; all important, some receiving a larger measure of grace than others, but all working together to re-enforce unity (e.g., car, human body, football team). This means that ultimately the individuals in the Church are not independent but interdependent just like the parts of a car or the organs of the human body or members of a football team. They all minister together to a different degree and need one another's ministry in order to work properly. We all share the same life, life in Christ so we all need to minister together to preserve unity.

Ministering to one another in proportion to the grace given to each of us edifies the body, builds up the church, and promotes love and joy among believers. Grace ministries are not first of all for individual enjoyment but for the equipping of the saints and building up the body of believers.

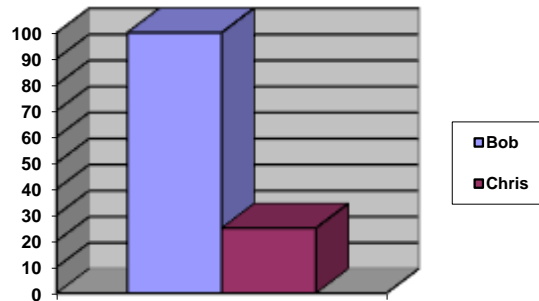
What we will find next week is that here in Ephesians 4:11ff God is not giving gifts to each believer but that God is giving the Church a gift, namely, gifted people (God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc., to the Church) for the purpose of building up the church.

The difference in the amount of grace given to an individual does not determine its value. The difference in value is determined only by the individual's use of the grace given within the body!

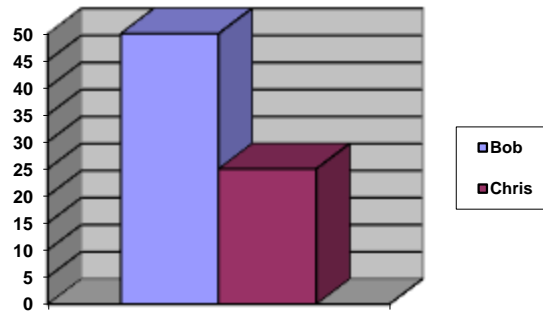
Measure of Grace Given (chart 1)  
Determined by Christ



Value of Grace Given (chart 2)  
Determined by Believer



Final Result (chart 3)



Let's say Chris is given a larger measure of grace (chart 1) to minister to others than Bob (100 vs. 50). This is determined by Christ. But the value of the grace given (chart 2) to each of these believers is in proportion to the individual's use of the grace given in ministering to others. If Chris does not minister the grace given him in proportion to the amount of grace given, then the value of the grace he received from Christ will not be as valuable as someone who does minister in proportion to the grace given. In this case Chris only ministers 25% of the measure of grace given him whereas Bob ministers 100% of the grace given to him. As a final result (chart 3), even though Bob was given a lesser measure of grace the value of the grace given to him is higher than Chris (more mathematical calculations would show the difference of value to be Bob 50 vs Chris 25).

There is no room for jealousy in such a design except when believers get spiritually envious of other believers who advance by ministering their measure of grace much better than they do (cf. 1 John 3:10b-15 for a case of spiritual envy).

***Greek Text 4:8 dio (conj coord) legei (verb 3S PAI), anabas (AAPart NSM) eis (prep) upsos (noun ASN) echmaloteusen (3S AAI) aichmalosian (noun ASF), edoken (3S AAI) domata (noun ANP) tois anthropois (noun DPM).***

**Translation 4:8** Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He captured the captives, He gave gifts to men'.

*dio legei*, “Therefore it says” is an introductory formula used by Paul to introduce an OT quotation. Whenever we see the word **therefore**, we have to ask what it is “there for”. In this case it refers to what he just said about Christ giving a measure of grace to each believer. Then Paul quotes or summarizes Ps. 68.

*anabas eis upsos echmaloteusen aichmalosian edoken domata tois anthropois*, 'When He ascended on high, He captured the captives, He gave gifts to men'. Now, there's a little problem here because although this verse resembles Ps. 68:18 it has several differences.

**LXX 67:19** avne,bhj eivj u[yoj hv|cmalw,teusaj aivcmalwsi,an e;labej do,mata evn  
avnqrw,pw|

**Eph. 4:8** avnaba.j eivj u[yoj hv|cmalw,teusen aivcmalwsi,an( e;dwken do,mata  
toi/j avnqrw,poij

The LXX is a direct translation from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. But Paul's version has six changes. 1) he changes the verb avne,bhj to the participle avnaba.j, 2) he changes both the verbs from second person singular (hv|cmalw,teusaj, e;labej) to the third person singular (hv|cmalw,teusen, e;dwken), 3) he changes the verb from “receiving” to “giving”, 4) he changes the singular avnqrw,pw to the plural avnqrw,poij, 5) he leaves out the preposition evn, and 6) he adds the article toi/j.

Of these six changes two are very important. *First*, the shifting from **you** (2<sup>nd</sup> person) in Psalm 68 to **he** (3<sup>rd</sup> person) in Ephesians 4 and *second*, the shift from **receiving gifts** in Psalm 68 to **giving gifts** in Ephesians 4.

**Psalm 68:18** You have ascended on high, **You** have led captive *Your* captives;

**You** have *received* gifts among men,

**Eph. 4:8** When **he** ascended on high, **he** led captive a host of captives, and

**he** *gave* gifts to men.

To compound the difficulties there is to add to this the fact that Ps. 68 is reckoned “as textually and exegetically the most difficult and obscure of all the psalms”.<sup>ii</sup> Many various interpretations have been proposed.

So, we have to ask why is Paul quoting Ps. 68 in such a loose fashion? Why didn't he quote it directly? What is Paul doing? Several suggestions have been made. First, some have said he altered the text to bring out the full meaning. But his changes don't bring out the meaning but give a different meaning. Second, some have said that he was relying on the Jewish Targums which read more like Ephesians 4:8, but they are not Scripture. Third, some say he used the Syriac Peshitta but it is impossible to know if this work depended on Ephesians 4:8 or the Jewish Targums because it was written 4 or 5 centuries after Christ. Others say Paul used the rabbinic interpretive technique of midrash peshet and applied it to Christ, but the Ephesians would be quite unaware of this method.

Perhaps what Paul is doing is not just quoting one verse (Ps. 68:18) but rather he is summarizing the whole Psalm (68). The words happen to resemble 68:18. By way of analogy, a news reporter may summarize a 30-minute speech in just a few sentences. One of those sentences may be very similar to one of the sentences in the speech and someone might accuse him of misquoting the speaker when that was not his purpose. Instead, the reporter was simply trying to summarize the entire speech and one of his summary sentences happened to be very similar to a sentence in the speech.

A study of Psalm 68 shows that it is God who gives gifts. Numerous gifts are mentioned in Psalm 68 that God gives to people. Therefore, it appears that Paul is picking up this theme of God giving gifts to people from Psalm 68 and applying it to the church.

This is just one example of why it is so difficult to study the NT epistles without much OT background. The more you try to study the NT epistles the more you find that the authors are deeply schooled in the OT. If there is one major weakness in terms of biblical knowledge among believers today it is clearly a lack of knowledge of the OT. But this only results in misunderstanding of the NT because the NT authors presuppose that their readers already know the OT. The NT is to be read in light of the OT and what I find myself having to do as we study Ephesians is spend time in the OT so I can understand what Paul is doing.

Now that we understand what Paul is doing, that he is summarizing Ps 68 in one verse that happens to be similar to 68:18 then we can analyze what Paul is saying here in his summary verse 8.

**When he ascended on high, he captured the captives.** In Psalm 68 this phrase originally referred to God who was at Mt Sinai giving Moses the law and then came to ascend to the high Zion. To ascend to Zion God had to conquer the Canaanites. This resulted in taking

many captives. The word here for **captives** is consistently used of military captives who are captured. Certainly, this is the case in Ps 68. God has had victory over His enemies.

**He gave gifts to men** presents some difficulties. In Ps 68 it is the captives who bring the spoils to God. But Paul turns this around and says that Christ gives gifts to those who are on the victorious side with Him. If God receives the spoils of war from His enemies in Ps 68 then it makes sense that since we are on His side that He would then give gifts to us out of those spoils as portrayed here in Eph. 4:8.

But who are the captives? In Ps 68 it is clear that the captives are the enemies of Israel. But who are the captives in Eph. 4:8? The captives are the enemies of Christ, namely, Satan, sin, and death. Christ had victory over Satan, sin, and death at the cross (or sinful people) and He gives gifted people to those who have been identified with Him (4:5 “one baptism”). Paul’s point in summarizing Ps. 68 here is to show that Christ has the right to give gifts to the Church because He is the ascended victor. He is not trying to show that Christ received the gifts from Satan and the defeated foes. These have been defeated and because we are redeemed, we have been freed from Satan, sin, and death and therefore receive gifts from our victorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The gifts we will find out are gifted people given to the Church to equip and build up the Church.

**God defeated and plundered His enemies in the OT and often gave the spoils to His people Israel, e.g., Egyptians (Exod. 3:22; 12:36), Canaanites (Ps. 68).**

**Christ defeated His enemies: Satan, sin, and death in the NT and gives gifted people to the Church**

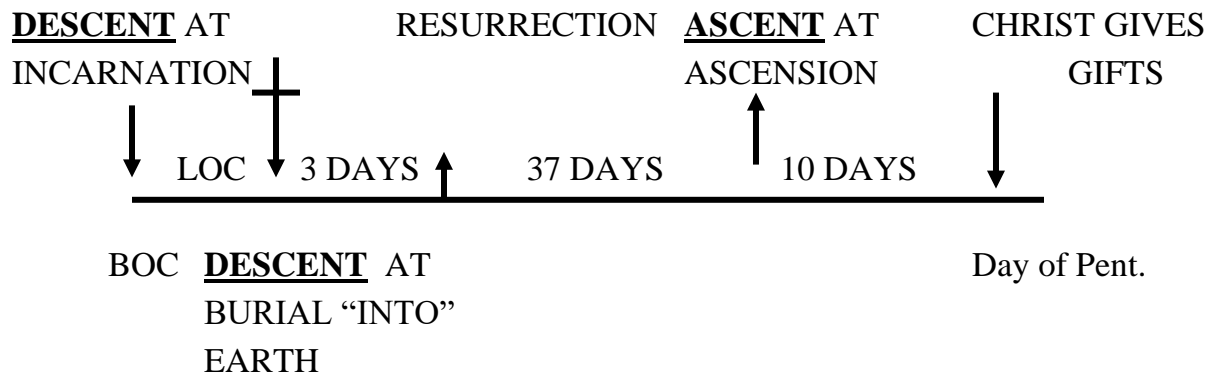
*Greek Text 4:9 to (art NSN) de (conj coord) anebe (verb 3S AAI) ti (interr pronoun NSN) estin (verb 3S PAI), ei (conj subord) me (particle) hoti (conj subord) kai (adverb) katabe (verb 3S AAI) eis (prep) ta katotera (adj ANP comparative) [mere] (noun APN) tes ges (noun GSF)?*

**Translation 4:9 Now what is the meaning 'he ascended' if not that also he descended into the lower parts of the earth?**

*to de anebe ti estin*, “**Now what is the meaning 'he ascended'**. These are difficult phrases. The conclusion of the matter is that Paul wants to make a comparison between ascending and descending. He’s saying, “Now what does it mean ‘he ascended’ **if not that he also descended**. In other words, he’s drawing out the implications. If Christ has ascended then He must have descended at some prior time.



*ei me hoti kai katabe*, “if not that also he descended.” In other words, the meaning of Christ’s ascension presupposes his previous descent. Traditionally this has been interpreted as Christ’s descent to earth at his incarnation (birth) and Christ’s ascent from earth to heaven after the resurrection (40 days after crucifixion and 10 days of Pentecost). But what do we do with the last phrase?



*eis ta katotera [mere] tes ges*, “into the lower parts of the earth?” The **lower parts of the earth** seem to indicate that Christ didn’t just descend *to the surface of the earth* but *into the earth*. The difficulty here is where are the **lower parts of the earth**? Some scholars think that this corresponds to Christ going down to Hades to preach to the evil spirits in this region (comparative genitive). But there are several problems with this view. *First*, grammatically it is very improbable, if not impossible.<sup>iii</sup> *Second*, there is no indication anywhere in Scripture that Christ ascended from Hades. Scripture demonstrates that Christ ascended from earth (READ Acts 1:9-11). *Third*, the place where Jesus was victorious over Satan, sin, and death was at the cross, not in Hades. Hades was where He announced His victory. A second view that fits well with the context is that **the lower parts of the earth** refer to “the grave” (possessive genitive). This viewpoint includes Christ’s descent to earth at the incarnation and His death on the cross where He had victory over Satan, sin, and death as well as His burial in the ground. His body was literally put “into” (Greek *eis*) the earth. I’m not saying that Christ did not descend into Hades sometime during those three days. But the context of this passage and the phrase **lower parts of the earth** teach that Christ descended into the “grave”. Further support for this view is found in Ps. 63:9 (LXX 63:10) where a very similar phrase is used by David to refer to the “grave”. “*But those who seek my life to destroy it, Will go into the depths of the earth.*”

**Greek Text 4:10** *ho katabas (AAPart NSM) autos (pronoun NSM) estin (verb 3SPAI) kai (adverb) ho anabas (AAPart NSM) huperano (prep Gen) panton (adj GPM) ton ouranon (noun GPM), hina (conj subord) plerose (verb 3S AAS) ta panta (adj APN).*

**Translation 4:10 He who descended is also He who ascended over and above all the heavens, in order that he might fill all things.**

*ho katabas autos estin kai hoanabas, “He who descended is also He who ascended”.* This phrase stresses that the very one who descended into the grave is the one who ascended, namely Jesus Christ. So, here the order is clear: 1) descent and 2) ascent. Next, we are given the location of Christ’s ascension.

*huperano panton ton ouranon, “over and above all the heavens,”.* He ascended *huperano all the heavens*. The word translated **far above** in the NASB doesn’t really fit the Greek word here. **far above** makes it sound like Jesus is just way above the all the heavens. But that’s not what Paul is trying to communicate. We’ve seen this word before in Ephesians in 1:21, also speaking about the location of Christ’s ascension. The word here is *huperano* and it is used in Heb. 9:5 of the cherubim wings that extend “over and above” the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. The cherubim wings are not “far above” the mercy seat but they are “over and above” the mercy seat. That is the sense being used here by Paul. Christ has ascended to a position that is **over and above all the heavens**. So, the picture you want to have of Christ ascended is more like an umbrella. Christ has ascended to a position of dominion over a realm. Now, when Paul goes on to say **all the heavens**, there he is picturing Christ far above **all the heavens**. So, Christ is **far over and above the heavens**. By stating **all the heavens** Paul may have in mind the three heavens mentioned by Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2. Christ has passed through the heavens (READ Heb. 4:14-15) into the highest heaven (Heb. *shamayim shamayim*). Militarily this is significant. At the ascension Christ is pictured as a military warrior who is taking the high ground. Taking the high ground is very important in military battles. It’s much easier to fight from an elevated position than from a ground level position. From an elevated position a warrior can swoop down on his enemies and cause sudden and rapid devastation. At the ascension Christ took the high ground for three express purposes.

*First, to send the Holy Spirit.* Turn to **John 16:7** “*But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*”

*Second, to be your intercessor.* Turn to **Hebrews 7:23-27** <sup>23</sup> *The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,* <sup>24</sup> *but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.* <sup>25</sup> *Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* <sup>26</sup> *For it was fitting for*

us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; <sup>27</sup> who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” (also cf. 1 John 2:1). This intercessory ministry began on the Day of Pentecost and will continue until the middle of the tribulation. Turn to **Revelation 12:6-13**, the most symbolic chapter in the Bible. “<sup>6</sup> Then the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God [Bozrah/Petra], so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days [2<sup>nd</sup> half of tribulation 3 ½ years]. <sup>7</sup> And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon [Satan]. The dragon and his angels waged war, <sup>8</sup> and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “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, he who accuses them before our God day and night. <sup>11</sup> “And they overcame him 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. <sup>12</sup> “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.” <sup>13</sup> And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.” So, at the middle of the tribulation Satan will be kicked out of heaven, he will no longer have access to the high ground where he accuses us day and night. At that time Christ will prepare for the third purpose of His ascension.

*Third, to descend suddenly and swiftly to destroy His enemies* and establish His earthly kingdom. Because Christ holds the high ground, He can accomplish this sudden and swift military victory. Turn to Rev. 19:11-21. In the same way (visibly) that He ascended (Acts 1) He will descend to Bozrah (i.e., Petra) to protect Israel and to destroy the antichrist and his armies once for all. So, the ascension is a crucial doctrine to understanding the sending of the Holy Spirit, the intercessory ministry of Christ (Heb. 4:14), and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming (Rev. 19:11-21). Our Lord presently sits on the high ground, His plan is certain to come to pass.

*hina plerose ta panta*, “in order that he might fill all things.” In the present context the purpose of the ascension is exclaimed to be **that he might fill all things**. So, in this context, the purpose of the ascension is associated with the sending of the Holy Spirit. Since Christ has taken the high ground and sits in a position of rule or dominion, he has the right to give a measure of grace to each individual as He determines. We all have the same Spirit but

there are a variety of effects due to the measure of grace given and the individuals use of the grace in ministry. This conclusion fits well with Eph. 1:23 where God filled Christ with His moral excellence and power and Christ filled the Church with that moral excellence and power. Since Christ sits in a position of rule over the universe, He has the right to fill the universe with gifted persons as He wills.

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<sup>i</sup> Constable, Tom, (<http://www.sonilight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ephesians.pdf>), 45.

<sup>ii</sup> Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 525.

<sup>iii</sup> See Wallace, Daniel, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, p. 112.

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