

Eph 4:10-12 He Might Fill All Things
Jason Henderson
Market Street Fellowship
080608

Ephesians 4:10-12
That He Might Fill All Things

The last couple weeks I shared some thoughts about the difference between having a provision based relationship with the Lord and having a purpose based relationship with the Lord. Today I want to get back into our study of the book of Ephesians and continue where we left off in Ephesians chapter 4.

We spent three weeks looking at Ephesians 4:8-10 at what it means that Christ took captivity captive and ascended on high. If you'll remember, Paul borrows from Psalm 68 and demonstrates that the judgment, captivity, and restoration of Old Covenant Israel point directly to the death, burial, and resurrection of a people who Christ takes captive in Himself. It is Christ that takes a people into the judgment of God in His flesh. And it is Christ who leads those people in Himself, out from the grave, on to the Highway of Holiness, to Zion—the city of God.

It is Christ who descends for judgment and ascends in glory, bringing us with Him to the Father. And He ascends so that He might fill all things. Lets start by reading the verse.

Eph 4:10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

I want to look at what it means for Christ to fill all things. A lot of our time this morning will be spent on that. But before I go there, let me just say a thing or two about this ascending and descending.

When Scripture uses the terms ascend and descend having to do with Christ, or when it uses the terms above and below, you mustn't think about location. Don't think about up and down or near and far. It's the same with the words heaven and earth. The distance between heaven and earth is the difference between Adam and Christ. The distance between above and below is the otherness between the living and the dead. Its not about two different places. Its about two different kinds. That which is below is that which is of the old, the first, the dead, the dark. That which is above is of the new, the second, the living, the light.

So when Christ descended into the earth, or as He says in John chapter 6, when the Son of Man descended from heaven, He didn't have to move from one place to another place. He had only to be born of another kind. He descended into the earth not by flying down out of the clouds, but by coming out of the womb of an adamic woman. We all know the story. He was born a man, submitted to the Law, so that He could put them both away. That is how Jesus "came down."

And therefore when we are risen with Christ, or when we are brought with Him into the ascension that we just read about, you mustn't picture yourself floating up into

space. Your body did not have to leave the earth for your soul to ascend above. Your outward shell has nothing to do with whether or not your soul has risen and dwells above in the heavens. Because it has nothing to do with being two places at the same time. It has everything to do with your soul breaking out of one kind and realm and being translated into another. Your body is inconsequential to the entire thing. It stays put until it dies as a mere earthen vessel. Above and below has to do with the dwelling place of the soul, never the dwelling place of the body. Bodies don't go above. Paul says,

***Col 1:13** He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,*

So Christ's descending into the earth, and our ascension with Him has to do with what T. Austin-Sparks calls "the distance of difference". The journey isn't about space travel or time travel or passage into another dimension. The journey is out from one man and into Another. That is why the types and shadows of the Old Testament of this journey read as they do.

For Abraham, the journey was a journey of faith. It wasn't about getting from point A to B to C and finally till Z. **It was a journey that involved two things and two things only.** It involved the perpetual leaving behind of what was formerly his. And it was a perpetual revealing of an inheritance that God had given to him. That was the journey. Those two things. Leaving behind what God had put behind. And apprehending by faith what God had laid before Him as an inheritance.

And, with precisely this reality in mind, Paul says

***Phi 3:13** Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, **14** I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

I know that I've mentioned this before, but the word "behind" here is not a word that has reference to time. Its not forgetting the things that happened yesterday or last year. That's not what he's talking about. The word "behind" has to do with what is literally behind the back. Behind you. That was Abraham's journey in type and shadow and it is ours in spirit and truth. We progressively forget what God has put away by the cross. And we reach to lay hold of what is ahead. And again, that word ahead is not a word that denotes time. It's not reaching for what is ahead next month or year or when the body dies. It is a reaching to lay hold of what is directly in front of us, in our presence. It literally is translated "in the sight of", or "in the presence of".

The point is that you are already in the presence of what you are apprehending, just as Abraham was already in the Land when God said...

***Gen 13:14** And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look **from the place where you are**—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; **15** for all the land **which you see** I give to you and your descendants forever.*

You see where salvation has you, and you forget the things that have been crucified to you. And I said all of this because we so often misunderstand our journey. We

misunderstand below and above. Christ descended by being found in the form of a man. We ascend by being found in another Man. The man who raised us up with Him and seated us in the heavens in Christ. We've been through those verses already in this study of Ephesians. The words above and below, heaven and earth, are used to speak of an incredible distance between two kinds and two creations. But that distance isn't measured in miles or dimensions. That distance is measured by difference.

So Scripture will say things like "you have been raised together with Christ", or "since you have been raised with Him, fix your eyes on things above". We can get our eyes off of the clouds when we talk to God. That's not what that means. The things above are not in a different location in the natural realm. You might as well look down as up. It's not in either direction. It's in another Man, another kind, another life altogether. And you fix your mind on things above as those things are revealed by and in and as the Lord Jesus Christ. You fix your mind where you are only as He reveals where you are.

Alright, in this verse Jesus is said to descend so that He might ascend and fill all things. What are the all things that He is filling. I can actually understand this phrase in two different ways. I know that both are valid because they are taught numerous other places in the New Testament. The question is only what does Paul mean here. Is he specifically talking about one or the other or both here. But since each of them is true, I'll mention them both.

The first sense in which Christ fills all things is the topic of the entire book of Hebrews, as well as several other books of the New Testament. It is the reality of how Christ, in the New Covenant, becomes the substance and realization of all the many "things" that were testified to in the Old Covenant.

There is an old statement that somebody reminded me of this week— "how do you eat an elephant?...one bite at a time". That's kind of how God showed Christ to the earth through the Old Covenant. One bite at a time. There was so much that He saw of His Son, so much that was there. So much involved in His eternal plan and purpose. It is as simple as "Christ all and in all", but it is as big as Christ Himself. In the same way that you couldn't just put an elephant on your plate and say "eat this", God couldn't put Christ on display and say "understand this". To eat an elephant you'd have to consume it in small and varied bite sized pieces. This is something of how God feeds us the understanding of Christ.

What was one in His heart and mind before the foundation of the world, God diced up into thousands of individual testimonies. Not individual testimonies of different things. Many testimonies of one thing. But there was so much to say and show about this enormous elephant, so many aspects and realities, so much wisdom and power, that God displayed His Son in the natural realm through an incredible variety of pictures and shadows and figures.

The many things came out from God's view of that one Son, and ultimately were gathered up again into that one Son. In this One Son was a judgment and life, justification and redemption, a high priest, a king, a judge, a dwelling place, a sacrifice, an offering, a sweet smelling incense to His Father, and so much more. But each of these things became individual and separate ordinances in the Old Covenant. The priest, the prophet, the judge and the king were all different people. The sacrifice, the incense, the offering, and the showbread were all different figures.

The fire and the cloud and the light and the water were all natural manifestations of one God. But in the resurrection of Christ, all of these things, all of these pictures were filled up with substance. They were all gathered back into the one they had come out from. All of these concepts were filled by a Person.

(Do diagram of Melchizedek for illustration)

So that is one sense in which Christ is said to fill all things. Often, in the New Testament, the phrase "all things" refers very specifically to the all things that spoke of Him. The all things of the Old Covenant that are mere concepts and shadows and figures until He fills them with Himself in the resurrection.

But the other way that this verse could be taken, and the way that I think it was probably intended, was in reference to Christ's body. We are the all things that Christ fills Himself. He fills all things in us. I lean towards this as what Paul had in mind primarily because of the context. He's been talking about the body. He's been describing that body growing up into the unity of the faith, the full measure of Christ. And he's just about to describe how this filling is how God gives some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, pastors. And we'll get to those specific roles soon.

I want to pause here and look at what it means for Christ to fill us. We use that sort of language very frequently. The idea of Christ filling our heart, or being filled with the Spirit, or Christ being formed in us is something we hear a lot. But what exactly does it mean?

In a word, it has everything to do with Truth and Light filling your soul so that in every way you are brought into line with and become expressive of that Truth. It has to do with the living Word of God permeating and saturating your soul so that in all things you bear its image and imprint and reality. It has to do with your thoughts and nature and perspective being constantly displaced and removed and replaced with the Light who is the Life of your soul. All words fail in trying to describe this. But nevertheless I want to do my best.

Just prior to going to the cross, Jesus said something very interesting to the disciples.

Joh 16:12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. **13** *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;*

It's the first part that I want you to look at with me. Jesus says that He has many more things to say, but they cannot "bear" them now. If you're like me, you've probably read before and thought that He meant that the disciples couldn't *handle* any more. Or maybe that He would like to share, but they wouldn't *understand* it right now. But that's not what that Greek word translated "bear" means. It doesn't mean handle or understand. It actually means bear. It means they could not bear in themselves, carry, put on, walk in, the things that Jesus desired to speak to them.

The problem wasn't just that they couldn't understand. I'm sure that was also true, but they hadn't understood anything He said up to this point. The reason Jesus didn't share more with them was because they couldn't bear in themselves, carry in their soul, put on the reality of the things that He wanted very much to

share with them. And so He remains silent and promises that the Spirit of Truth would come and work to that end.

I want you to see something in this. This is something extremely important. I want you to see that God's communication with you and revelation to you is according to whatever you can bear. And like Jesus, I don't mean it's according to what you can understand or handle learning. I mean that he is going to show you only what you can bear in yourself, what you can put on, what you will take of Him in exchange for something of you. There is no other reason for Him to tell you anything.

I hope you can hear the distinction here. God does not communicate with you in order to teach you things. Every natural mind assumes that He does, and every natural mind is wrong. In fact, God does not often answer our questions. Have you noticed that? Do you have some questions you've been waiting on for years? You're likely to keep waiting. God rarely answers questions. At least not with information.

As we've said before, part of the reason for this is often that our questions are born out of darkness and have no answer that truth can really communicate. We don't understand what we're asking. In other words, truth destroys most of our questions instead of answering them, because there was not anything real about them to begin with. They are questions in our hearts only because there is darkness in our hearts where the question appears to have relevance. Kiah, my three-year-old son, asks me a lot of questions that don't have answers because the questions themselves are expressions of ignorance. The questions don't make sense, or they come out of a totally wrong way of thinking. Sometimes the best I can do with His questions is just try to change the subject and get him thinking about something else.

But more often, I suppose, God doesn't answer our questions because it would accomplish absolutely nothing at all if He did. Think about this with me. Let's say I want God to answer a question I have about Calvinism vs. Armenianism. What would it actually accomplish if He did? Let's just imagine for a moment that one of those man-made theological boxes was more right than the other. What would it accomplish if God told you which one was more correct. What did that do for you? What did that do for God? Somebody says "well, now I can teach it correctly!". Ok...to what end? Or maybe you want to know why your great uncle died of a heart attack. Or what the ten horned beast stands for in the book of Revelation. We actually think there is value in knowing correct information. We think it is valuable simply because it's true. Wrong. It is valuable to you and to God only to the extent that you can bear the truth. God does not teach your soul for any other reason except that you bear in yourself, carry in your soul, and be conformed to the image of whatever of Christ He is communicating.

His communication with man is in order that they bear in themselves His Word. He desires only that they receive and live and bring forth the increase of what was given. Many of Christ's parables speak with reference to this. He speaks His word into different kinds of soil. The desire isn't that that word is "believed" by the soil. The desire is that the soil bring forth the increase of the "word of the kingdom". He gives money to three different people. His desire isn't that they just receive the money. His desire is that receiving would bring forth increase. And the increase of that money, and the increase of that plant, both speak of the

increase of that living Word who is received in the soul. It speaks of the bearing in yourself that Word, that Truth, that Light, that Son, and putting on, carrying, the reality of what was said, shown, sown, given. **Anything else we do with truth only serves to exalt ourselves. Anything else we do with true words nullifies the cross of Christ.**

1Co 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Have you ever stopped to think what this verse is telling us? Paul is telling us that if the gospel of Jesus Christ is relegated to mere true words, to learning true words, wise words, right understanding, right doctrine...if the gospel is anything less than the bearing in yourself of the living Word, and experiencing His death and the experience of His resurrection, than we have nullified the word of God. We have made the gospel of no effect. How do you nullify the word of God? It's quite simple. You'll do it quite naturally. You'll do it without thinking. All it takes is to think that believing words is the same as bearing the Word. All it takes is to think that loving true teaching is the same as living the Truth.

We, as the body of Christ, are so used to a nullified gospel, a non-effectual gospel, that we often don't even know the difference. We don't even know what to compare it to. We are so accustomed to the powerlessness of true words that we don't even realize that the gospel of the cross is the literal power of God to work resurrection life into the soul.

*1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but **to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

But in order for this to happen, the word of the cross needs to find room in your soul. Not words about the cross. The hearing of the word. The word that seeks place in your heart.

Joh 8:37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

In order for Christ to fill you with Himself, there must be, not just a desire to know true things, but a desire to bear in yourself the decrease that truth demands. God will show you only what you can carry. God will reveal His Word when he finds a place that gives it room.

You have to understand that God is not trying to convince you of something. That's not why He teaches you. He's trying to turn you into something. He's not trying to educate you. He's trying to transform you. True Christian education is the learning of Christ Himself as the soul bears His death and resurrection. Every other kind of Christian education must either have that as its goal, or it is just learning words. So God speaks and shows and reveals only where truth has room to remain in you. He speaks where truth can fill up an area of your soul where room has been made, flesh has been exposed, turned from, and hated. You have to come to hate what fills your soul in order to have room for something else. Jesus says "unless a man hate his own life, he cannot be my disciple".

His words and truth are always available and always seeking to find room. But Christ will be heard but not perceived, seen but not known, until there is room in

us to know Him. How often did Jesus say "let him who has an ear hear". Or "you have ears and do not hear, eyes but do not see".

It's like that pitcher and rock analogy that I mentioned last week. If I presented to you a pitcher full of rocks and asked you to fill it with water, there would be a definite limit to how much water could fill the pitcher. You could hold the hose directly over the pitcher for forty years, but until I was willing to bear the decrease of one of those rocks, there would be no change. And I could blame you for not filling me because, as far as I was concerned I had held my pitcher there for 40 years...but the problem is in me.

Truth does not appear next to our ideas. It appears instead of our ideas. It doesn't ever fit with what we've thought. It replaces what we've thought. And God knows what we can bear. God knows the difference between spiritual curiosity and a heart that desires to bear His fullness. He always shows us what we can bear. The way that God fills us, as Paul mentions in Ephesians chapter 4, is by causing our soul to bear in itself His living Word. He reveals His Son in us and that Son takes His rightful place in the territory of our soul. And in that way His kingdom has increase. In that way He expands the borders of Israel. He fills us even as He filled up that land. One city at a time, and always by destroying what was formerly there.