

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON LXXXIII : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4:1-16)

## **Ephesians 4:10** —

*He that descended is even the same also that ascended vp even above all hevens to fulfill all things.* (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

*Hee that descended, is euen the same that ascended, farre aboue all heauens, that hee might fill all things)* (Geneva Bible, 1599)

*He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)* (King James Version, 1769)

*he who went down is the same also who went up far above all the heavens, that He may fill all things* — (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

*He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)* (Revised Version, 1885)

*He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)* (American Standard Version, 1901)

*He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)* (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

*He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)* (New King James Version, 1982)

*He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)* (New American Standard Version, 1995)

*He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)* (New International Version, 2011)

*He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)* (English Standard Version, 2011)

ὁ καταβάς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβάς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

ὁ καταβάς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβάς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα. (NA28 Greek New Testament)

**He who descended is also the One who ascended** — ὁ καταβάς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβάς [ho katabas autos estin kai ho anabas] — **THE ORDER MAKES THE 'PENTECOST' THEORY HIGHLY UNLIKELY** — While we discarded this theory as to Paul's meaning of v. 9, it is worth observing that the order in which Paul speaks against the Pentecost theory. "The order is first descent and then ascent. Therefore, the theory mentioned above, namely, that it refers to Christ's bestowal of gifts at Pentecost, seems highly unlikely. Rather it asserts that Jesus, who descended to earth and the grave, is the one who ascended." [Hoehner, 536]

**EMPHASIS IS UPON 'HE AND NO OTHER'** — The translations all handle this differently but it appears they each try to make this emphasis:

*'He that descended is even the same...'* (Geneva)

*'He that descended is even the same also ...'* (Tyndale)

*'He that descended is the same also...'* (KJV, RV, ASV)

*'He who went down is the same also...'* (YLT)

*'He who descended is also the One ...'* (NKJV)

*'He who descended is he who also ...'* (RSV)

*'He who descended is Himself also ...'* (NASV)

*'He who descended is the very one ...'* (NIV)

*'He who descended is the one who also ...'* (ESV)

**"He that descended = He, and no other."** [Alford, 117] **"It was the first thought of every Christian mind that Christ had come down from heaven to live and work among men on earth for their salvation. Founding on this Paul declares that He**

who descended, whom all knew to be Christ, He and no other was also the Person who ascended. So he reminds his readers of the source of all the gifts in operation in the Church or enjoyed by individual Christians — the ascended Christ.” [Salmond, 327] “Paul completes this thought with two assertions about Christ’s ascent and descent. First, he says that the one who descended and the one who ascended are identical with each other. He does this not to make a christological point about the identity of the incarnate with the heavenly Christ, nor to make a pastoral point about the identity of the exalted Christ with the Spirit who is present in the church. Instead, the assertion that the Christ who ascended is identical with the Christ who descended prepares the way for the statement in 4:11 that the very one who both descended and ascended is the one who gave gifts to the church. This is why the emphatic [‘he, himself’] in 4:10 is repeated in 4:11. **The Christ who is powerful enough to conquer the enemies of God’s people in every corner of the universe is also the Christ who equips God’s people to fulfill their destiny of full union with him. If he was strong enough for one task, he is strong enough for the other.**” [Thielman, 272f] “The use of the participle ‘he who descended’ is emphatic by its position and it relates back to the finite verb ‘he descended’ in the previous verse. The personal pronoun with the verb ‘to be’ and the conjunction that is used adjunctively further stresses the emphasis and can be translated ‘he precisely is also’ or ‘is himself also.’ ... Some translations bring out the emphasis by translating it ‘no(ne) other than’ (NEB, JB, NJB) or ‘the very one’ (NW). With this emphasis, Paul stresses that the very person who descended is the one who ascended.” [Hoehner, 536]

**far above all the heavens, — ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν [huperanō pantōn tōn ouranōn] — THE PLURALITY OF HEAVENS —** “Having descended to the earth below in his incarnation, Christ then ascended higher than all the heavens. The ‘all’ indicates that a number of heavens is in view. Whether three (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2), seven, or more heavens are referred to, Christ has ascended above everything to the place of highest supremacy.” [O’Brien, 296; see also Best, 387; Abbott, 116; Salmond, 328; Hoehner, 537] “Lit., all the heavens. Cp. Heb. iv. 14; vii. 26; where the ascended High Priest is revealed as ‘having passed through the heavens,’ and as become loftier than the heavens. Scripture gives no precise revelation as to the number or order of regions or spheres of the upper world, the unseen universe of life and bliss. But its frequent use of the plural in regard of it, as here, whatever the origin of the usage, sanctions the thought that the Blessed (angels and glorified men), while from other points of view eternally concentrated and in company, and doubtless able, under their spiritual conditions of existence, to realize and act upon their unity to a degree unimagined by us, are yet distributed, classed, and ordered. ‘The Rabbis spoke of two heavens, or seven’. St Paul himself speaks (2 Cor. xii. 2) of a ‘third heaven,’ meaning, apparently, the immediate presence of God; possibly with a reference to the twofold division mentioned just above, and which, if so, is to some degree favoured by Scripture. The plain meaning of the present passage, in any case, is that the Lord passed through and beyond all regions of created blessedness into the region of the Throne.” [Moule, 108f]

**REGARDLESS OF THE NUMBER OF HEAVENS, CHRIST IS ABOVE ALL — THE DEITY OF CHRIST —** Paul here unequivocally expresses the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Jewish reader would readily remember the words of Jeremiah:

*‘Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him? says the LORD; Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD.’* (Jer 23:24 NKJV; note the word for LORD here is the personal name of God, Yahweh)

*“Whether his readers think there are three, seven, or more heavens, [Paul] asserts that Christ is above them all. The unique status ascribed to Yahweh in the OT and here in v 6 (‘above all’) as the high God whom the heavens cannot contain is now ascribed to the exalted Christ. It is interesting to note the paradoxical language used of Christ’s exaltation in Ephesians. He can be viewed both locally as in heaven (cf. 1:20; 6:9) and at the same time as above the heavens, beyond that which can be conceived in terms of created reality.”* [Lincoln, 248; see also Bruce, 345; Best, 387f] “The goal of Christ’s exaltation to the place of highest supremacy is ‘that he might fill all things’. This final clause corresponds to 1:23, ‘the fullness of him who fills everything in every way,’ where the verb ‘fill’ signifies to ‘control by exercise of sovereignty’. **Christ fills the universe, not in some semi-physical sense, but by his mighty rule over all things, a notion that is paralleled in the Old Testament when filling the universe, in this sense of exercising sovereign rule, is predicated of God: ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD’ (Jer. 23:24). Here the idea is transferred to Christ: he fills the universe through the exercise of his lordship over everything. This entails his functioning as the powerful ruler over the principalities (1:21), and giving grace and strength to his people (4:13,15-16), through whom he fulfils his purposes.**” [O’Brien, 296f] “That ascended up far above all heavens; that is, beyond this created world. When Christ is said to be in heaven, we must not view him as dwelling among the spheres and numbering the stars. Heaven denotes a place higher than all the spheres, which was assigned to the Son of God after his resurrection. Not that it is literally a place beyond the world, but we cannot speak of the kingdom of God without using our ordinary language. Others, again, considering that the expressions, above all heavens, and ascension into heaven, are of the same import, conclude that Christ is not separated from us by distance of place.” [Calvin, 275]

**that He might fill all things. — ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα [hina plērōsē ta panta] — THE ‘HINA’ CLAUSE CONNECTS TO THE ASCENT OF CHRIST ONLY —** Several of the commentators note that Paul is only referring to Christ’s ascent ‘in order that He might fill all things’ and not His descent and ascent. “This is the line taken by those who claim that the [hina] clause ‘that he might fill all things’ is linked with both Christ’s descent and ascent. But syntactically the [hina] clause is dependent on the ascent alone, and his filling all things has to do with his sovereign rule over everything.” [O’Brien, 296; see also Lincoln, 248; Best, 387]

**‘FILL ALL THINGS’ RELATES BACK TO 1:23 AND SPEAKS OF ALL THINGS BEING SUBJECT TO THE EXALTED CHRIST —** “Christ’s ascent is said here to be ‘above’ the heavens (cf. Heb 7.26) and not into the heavens (Acts 1.10), leaving the impression that [Paul] conceived of him as passing through the heavens to something above and

*beyond them. Yet it may be wrong to give 'above' a physical sense; it may instead indicate superiority; in 1.20f Christ's ascent brings about his rule over the powers and Ps 68.18 contains the idea of victory. The 'superior' traditionally occupies a 'higher' position than the 'inferior'. In fact both senses, the physical and the metaphorical, may be intended. In any case the word probably indicates that Christ occupies the same position as in his sitting at God's right hand.*" [Best, 386f; see also Salmond, 328; Alford, 117; Abbott, 116] "This language parallels his exaltation and enthronement 'in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion' (1:20-21). In the light of this similar phraseology, and the following purpose clause, 'in order that he might fill the whole universe', which corresponds to the expression in 1:23 (Christ 'fills everything in every way'), 'all the heavens' is best understood as a metaphorical reference to the powers of 1:21 who have been subjugated to him." [O'Brien, 296]

**THIS 'FILLING' IS UNIVERSAL** — "[T]he verb has the sense of filling, and ['all things'] is to be taken again in its widest application, and is not to be restricted to the world of believers or to the Church of Jew and Gentile.... The idea that is in the paragraph is ... that of a 'pervading and energising omnipresence'. *The thought is the larger one that the object of Christ's ascension was that He might enter into regal relation with the whole world and in that position and prerogative bestow His gifts as He willed and as they were needed. He was exalted in order that He might take kingly sway, fill the universe with His activity as its Sovereign and Governor, and His Church with His presence as its Head, and provide His people with all needful grace and gifts.*" [Salmond, 328; see also Hoehner, 537; Thielman, 273] "*When we hear of the ascension of Christ, it instantly strikes our minds that he is removed to a great distance from us; and so he actually is, with respect to his body and human presence. But Paul reminds us, that, while he is removed from us in bodily presence, he fills all things by the power of his Spirit. Wherever the right hand of God, which embraces heaven and earth, is displayed, Christ is spiritually present by his boundless power; although, as respects his body, the saying of Peter holds true, that 'the heaven must receive him until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.'* (Acts 3:21.)" [Calvin, 276]

**CONTEXT – SINCE CHRIST IS SOVEREIGN OVER THE UNIVERSE, HE HAS THE RIGHT TO BESTOW GIFTS** — "*Notice in that context, as in the present setting, Christ is head over all the universe (Col 1:17) and embodies the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9), fills the universe, and is head over it (Eph 1:22; cf. Col 1:18). In the present context Christ fills the universe with the message of love by the messengers on whom he has bestowed the gifts as he willed (vv. 7-8, 11). In conclusion, this verse serves as a critical link between the preceding and succeeding verses. Christ's descent enabled him to gain victory over Satan, sin, and death, followed by his ascent where as conqueror he had the right to bestow gifts to the church.*" [Hoehner, 537f] "*We may be in a position now to determine Paul's object in introducing the passage from Ps. lxxviii. and in applying it as he does. The general connection is clear enough. He bids his readers study lowliness, forbearance and unity, because there is one faith, one baptism, etc. They are not to be vexed or divided because one may have more of the gift of grace than another. All receive from Christ, each in his own way and measure as Christ wills; for, as the Psalm shows, all gifts come from Him.*" [Salmond, 328]