Ephesians 1:10, 'unite all things in him'

Published: Thursday 21st of April 2016 23:32 by Simon Wartanian
URL: https://www.thecalvinist.net/post/Ephesians-1:10-unite-All-Things-In-Him



In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight: 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to **unite all things in him,** things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:7-10)

This is a verse (v. 9) frequently used by Universalists that I've seen on the Internet. The idea is that Christ will "unite" everything in Himself, meaning, people who did not repent and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved – eventually, they may have to go to Purgatory or a "temporal hell," but in the end "Love Wins" and they are saved.

Word Study

Well let's take a close look at the word "**unite,**" it's the Strong's G346: [1]

- Original: **ἀνακεφαλαίομαι**
- Transliteration: Anakephalaiomai
- Phonetic: an-ak-ef-al-ah'-ee-om-ahee
- Definition:
    1. to sum up (again), to repeat summarily, to condense into a summary
- Origin: from G303 and G2775 (in its original sense)
- TDNT entry: 14:21,4
- Part(s) of speech: Verb

I think it is helpful to see how other translations other than the ESV have translated the verse:

KJV: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might **gather together in one** all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *[even]* in him:

NASB: with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the **summing up of all things** in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him

HCSB: for the administration of the days of fulfillment — to **bring everything together** in the Messiah, both things in heaven and things on earth in Him.

ISV: to usher in the fullness of the times and to **gather up all things** in Christ, both things in heaven and things on

earth.

NET: toward the administration of the fullness of the times, **to head up all things** in Christ – the things in heaven and the things on earth.

The NET Bible comments as following on the word ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι:

> The precise meaning of the infinitive ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι (*anakefalaiwsasqai*) in v. 10 is difficult to determine since it was used relatively infrequently in Greek literature and only twice in the NT (here and Rom 13:9). While there have been several suggestions, three deserve mention: (1) "To sum up." In Rom 13:9, using the same term, the author there says that the law may be "*summarized* in one command, to love your neighbor as yourself." The idea then in Eph 1:10 would be that all things in heaven and on earth can be summed up and *made sense out of* in relation to Christ. (2) "To renew." If this is the nuance of the verb then all things in heaven and earth, after their plunge into sin and ruin, are renewed by the coming of Christ and his redemption. (3) "To head up." In this translation the idea is that Christ, in the fullness of the times, has been exalted so as to be appointed as the ruler (i.e., "head") over all things in heaven and earth (including the church). That this is perhaps the best understanding of the verb is evidenced by the repeated theme of Christ's exaltation and reign in Ephesians and by the connection to the κεφαλή- (*kefalh-*) language of 1:22 (cf. Schlier, *TDNT* 3:682; L&N 63.8; M. Barth, *Ephesians* [AB 34], 1:89-92; *contra* A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* [WBC], 32-33).[2]

We see a variety of translations of the word *anakephalaiomai,* but one thing is certain, all things will be in/under Christ, whether that means salvation of all people or something else. The easiest translation to understand the meaning of the verse/word seems to be the **NET**. Paul here is writing about the coming exaltation and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ over everything that is created. This is further supported by other writings of Paul about the coming reign and exaltation of the Lord Jesus like Colossians 1:16, where we are told "For **by him all things were created**, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all things were created through him** and **for him."** All things were created for the glory of the Lord Jesus. All authority is the Lord Jesus' (Mt 28:18); the Father has put everything under his feet (Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8; 1Cor 15:24-28); the Lord Jesus is the head of all rule and authority (Col 2:10); everyone will bow down to Him, whether as servants or as defeated enemies (Phil 2:10). See also the use of Colossians 1:20 by Universalists or Universal Atonement advocates here. That is a text which to the sovereignty of Christ much like this passage here.

There seems to be no reason to think that this verse refers to salvation beyond the grave, after given an amazing display of God's predestination to salvation in the opening verses (Eph 1:3-6), salvation by grace through faith (2:8-9). After death comes the judgment (Heb 9:27). All things will be put under His feet and they already are actually— since all authority **is** given to the Lord Jesus (Mt 28:18), He already is Lord both of the living and the dead (Rom 14:9) and He upholds the universe by His omnipotence (Heb 1:3).

COMMENTARIES

Let's take a look at few commentaries and see how they understand the word "***anakephalaiomai***," shall we?

Here is what the **Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible** says:[3]

> **Gather together in one** , [***anakephalaioosasthai*** (G346)] - 'sum up again (in their original unity) for Himself under one head;' 'recapitulate.' The 'good pleasure which He purposed' was 'to sum up all things [***ta*** (G3588) ***panta*** (G3956): 'THE whole range of things'] in Christ' [***to*** (G3588) ***Christoo*** (G5547): 'the Christ']. God sums up the whole creation in Christ, the Head of angels, with whom He is linked by His invisible nature; and of men, with whom He is linked by His humanity; of Jews and Gentiles; of the living and the dead (Eph 3:15); of animate and inanimate creation. Sin has disarranged the creature's relation of subordination to God. God gathers up all in Christ (Col 1:20). Alford, 'The Church is subordinated to Him in conscious and joyful union; those who are not His spiritually in mere subjugation, yet consciously: the inferior creatures unconsciously;-objectively, all are summed up in Him.'

The **Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges** says the following:[4]

> **ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ χριστῷ,** 'to sum up the universe in the Christ.' These words define the ultimate end of the Gracious Purpose, the 'one far off Divine event to which the whole Creation

moves.' ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, properly a word in Rhetoric, Lat. *collectio*, describing the rapid repetition and summarizing of an orator's points previous to his practical conclusion. St Paul uses it (Rom 13:9) of the relation between the command 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' and all the commandments of the Second Table. Strictly, therefore, the words mean "to bring together each separate element in Creation in such a way that 'the Christ' may be the fitting description of the whole." This meaning helps to explain the presence of the article τῷ χριστῷ, ct. Eph 1:3, ἐν Χριστῷ. Otherwise it would be difficult not to believe that, however incorrectly in point of etymology, St Paul, in speaking 'of bringing the universe together under one head,' was thinking of Christ not as κεφάλαιον, but as κεφαλή, cf. Eph 1:22. A further development of the thought I owe to a note communicated by my friend Canon G. H. Whitaker: 'Plutarch says ἡ πόλις οἴκων τι σύστημα καὶ κεφάλαιον οὖσα (*Cat. maj.* 454 A). Now a well-planned city explains the point of the several houses. It is an *ordered* whole. You see why the houses were placed as they were, when you see the city from a balloon. So, in a well-written article, you come not to a new summary but to a κεφάλαιον, a heading up of all the points, showing how they tell. Paragraphs that had seemed disconnected are felt now to have been all bearing one way. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" brings all the separate commandments to the unity of a great principle. Moses, Joshua, Aaron come to a point in Christ.'

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[1] BDB (Brown, Driver, Briggs). Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "Resources."

[2] https://net.bible.org/#!bible/Ephesians+1:6 note number 25.

[3] Jamieson, Fausset, Brown; Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible. Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "Resources."

[4] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "Resources."