

# Purpose

## Greek Word Study

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10/7/2007

### Introduction

How does one define “purpose”? According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, the noun identifies “(1) the reason for which something is done or for which something exists; (2) resolve or determination.” The associated verb means “to have as one’s objective.”

In the New Testament, the concept of “purpose” is communicated by two related Greek words: the verb *protithēmi* and the noun *prothesis*, respectively pronounced as “pro TITH-em·ahee” and “PRO thes·is.”

Occurring 3x in the New Testament, Thomas defines the verb as “*to set before, i.e. propose.*” BDAG say it means “(1) to set something before someone as something to be done, set before someone as a task/duty; (2) to set forth publicly, display publicly, make available publicly; (3) to have something in mind beforehand, plan, propose, intend.”

Occurring 12x in the New Testament, Thomas says the noun identifies “*a setting forth, i.e. figuratively proposal, specifically the showbread, sacred (bread).*” BDAG say it means “(1) setting forth of something in public, setting forth, putting out, presentation; (2) that which is planned in advance, plan, purpose, resolve, will.”

### Divine Plans and Purpose

#### **Scheme**

God’s purpose is expressed through his scheme of redemption. Providing forgiveness for fallen humanity through Christ Jesus, **displayed publicly** as a propitiation in His blood through faith, God demonstrates his justice and mercy (Romans 3:21-26).

All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His **purpose** (Romans 8:28-39, esp. vs. 28). God’s purpose is evident in the unfolding history of the Old Testament, as seen in the promises to Eve (Genesis 3:15), Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Isaac (Genesis 25:21-26; **Romans 9:6-13, esp. vs. 11**), Jacob (Genesis 49:8-10), etc.

## ***Symbolism***

God's purpose was symbolized through the Tabernacle/Temple service of the Mosaic dispensation. The word under consideration, elsewhere translated "purpose" is also used with reference to the "**sacred bread**," i.e., literally the "loaves of presentation" (Hebrews 9:1-5, esp. vs. 2; cf. Exodus 25:30; 40:23; Leviticus 24:5-9). Jesus also referred to the "**consecrated bread**" that was placed in the house of God (Matthew 12:1-4; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5; cf. 1 Samuel 21:1-6).

## ***Summation***

His purpose is realized in the person of Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 1:9-14, esp. vs. 9 & 11**) and the church that he established (**Ephesians 3:8-13, esp. vs. 11**). Note that God's purpose is expressed through the inspired message of truth (Jude 3-4), and the church that Christ established is dedicated to the faithful proclamation of the same (1 Timothy 3:14-15). Let us, therefore, respect the divine pattern regarding the work, worship, organization of the church, along with its terms of membership and standard of discipline (Romans 6:17-18; 2 Timothy 1:13-14).

## **Human Plans and Purpose**

### ***Disaster***

Sometimes the plans of men conflict with the will of God. If we push ahead in such circumstances, calamity will ensue (**Acts 27:9-20, esp. vs. 13**; cf. Jeremiah 18:5-17).

### ***Delay***

Sometimes the plans of men harmonize with the purpose of God, but He wills that we wait. Through patient continuance in well-doing, our goals may be realized, but in a different manner and time than we might expect (**Romans 1:13**; 15:22-25; Acts 19:21; 28:16-31).

### ***Devotion***

Devotion is demanded (Romans 12:10-13). Barnabas encouraged the disciples at Antioch that with **resolute** heart they remain true to the Lord (Acts 11:19-26, esp. vs. 23).

## **Conclusion**

Paul exhorted Timothy by saying, "You followed my teaching, conduct, **purpose**, faith, patience, love, perseverance..." (2 Timothy 3:10-17, esp. vs. 10). Are you living with purpose? Have you submitted to God's purpose by heeding the call of the gospel (**2 Timothy 1:8-11, esp. vs. 9**)?