

Introduction to Ephesians

The Mystery of the Church Revealed

Text: Ephesians 1:1-2, Overview

Main Idea: The mystery of the Church's formation is revealed and instructions are given to the Church on how to bring glory to God in the world.

1. **Author & Recipients:** The Apostle Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus as a circular letter to others churches.
2. **Background & Occasion:** Paul wrote Ephesians along with Philippians, Colossians & Philemon around 60-62 AD while in a Roman prison and sent them back with Tychicus to be distributed to the churches. (Acts 18-20)
3. **Ten (10) Characteristics of the book of Ephesians.** (Bob Deffinbaugh)
 - 1) It is a Prison epistle.
 - 2) It is not a personal epistle (like Timothy, Titus, Philemon).
 - 3) It is not a problem-solving epistle (like Corinthians, Galatians).
 - 4) It is not a teaching epistle where ideas are developed (like Romans), but rather a declarative epistle.
 - 5) Ephesians is not a "need-meeting" epistle, nor is it a book which tells us how to be successful or effective.
 - 6) Paul is not preaching or teaching in Ephesians as much as he is praising God for who He is and what He has done, as evidenced in the person and work of Jesus Christ and in the gospel.
 - 7) Ephesians is the "Waterloo" of biblical commentators.
 - 8) Ephesians is the "high road" of New Testament revelation, changing our perspective from that of a citizen of this world to that of a citizen of heaven.
 - 9) Ephesians seeks to change our orientation from one which is man-centered to one which is God-centered.
 - 10) To sum up the essence of the contribution of Ephesians, this epistle draws our attention to the glory of God.

4. **Outline of the book of Ephesians.** (John Piper, Pleasures of God)

Chapters 1-3: The Glory of God in the Church (Theological)

- Chapter 1: The glory of God in redemption.
- Chapter 2: The glory of God in reconciliation.
- Chapter 3: The glory of God in the revelation of the mystery of the Church.

Chapters 4-6: The Glory & Pleasure of God through the Church (Practical)

- Chapter 4: The glory of God in the unity & growth of the Church.
- Chapter 5: The glory of God in the imitation of Christ by the Saints.
- Chapter 6: The glory of God in victory of Christ.

5. Content of the Book of Ephesians.

- **The first half:** Chapters 1-3 presents our position in Christ. (Theological)
 - Chapter 1: Paul presents our position in Christ in the heavenly realms all because of God's sovereign grace. The incomparable blessings come to us because the Father chose us (1:4-6), the Son redeemed us (1:7-12) & the Holy Spirit sealed us (1:13-14) all to the praise of His glory. Paul closes with a prayer that God will give us wisdom to comprehend all that God has given us (1:15-23).
 - Chapter 2: Paul reminds us of what we were before we met Christ and how we were raised from the dead and seated with Christ (v. 1-10), and how Christ Himself reconciled both Jews and Gentiles into one body through the cross, so that together we are being built into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (v. 11-22).
 - Chapter 3: Paul as a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles, encourages the Gentiles not to lose heart because God has revealed the mystery of the Church, that they are fellow heirs and members of the body of Christ (3:1-13). Paul prays again that God would grant believers to comprehend the unfathomable love of Christ that they may be filled up to the fullness of God (3:14-21).
- **The second half:** Chapters 4-6 present our practice in Christ. It reveals God's glorious purpose for the church and our how our position in Christ should cause us to live in practical godliness in this world. (Practical)

Paul lays out 5 "walks" and their effects: Because we are "seated" with Christ in heaven (2:6), in chapters 4-5 he outlines how we are to walk in this world, and in chapter 6 how we are to stand firm against the forces of evil. So, "sit" pictures our new position in Christ. "Walk" describes how to live in this world. "Stand" captures our resistance (victory) against the spiritual enemy.

- 1) The **worthy walk** in the unified one body (4:1-16).
- 2) The **purposeful walk** in the one new man (4:17-32).
- 3) The **loving walk** which is a **walk as children of light** in the dark world (5:1-14).
- 4) The **careful walk of wisdom** especially how it affects the family and the workplace (5:15-6:9).
- 5) To walk well in this evil world, we must learn to **stand against** the unseen forces of evil by putting on the full armor of God (6:10-20).

6. Major Themes in the book of Ephesians:

- **God & His sovereign eternal purpose** of summing up all things in Christ in the Church (1:9-11, 3:11). In spite of our sin, God has graciously and richly blessed His people. "Riches" is used 5 times, "grace" 12 times, "glory" 8 times, "fullness" or "filled" or "fills" 6 times, and "in Christ" occurs 15 times. Two times

Paul prays that the Church would be able to understand the depths of these glorious truths (1:15-23, 3:14-21).

- **The _____ Church _____** is the body of Christ which is at the heart of God's purpose (1:22-23, 2:19-22, 3:4-11, 5:25-27, 29-32). This was a mystery hidden in the past but is now revealed to be a new creation made of both Jew and Gentile on equal footing (2:11-22, 3:1-12) which means that the unity of the Church is very important (2:14-22, 4:1-13, 25).
- **The ___ Holy ___ Spirit ___**: We see that He seals (1:13-14, 4:30). We have access in one Spirit to the Father (2:18). We are being built into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (2:22). The Spirit now has revealed the mystery of Christ to the Apostles & prophets (3:5). The Spirit strengthens us with power in the inner man (3:16). We are to maintain the unity of one Spirit (4:3-4). We must be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30), but rather to be filled with the Spirit (5:18), to take up the sword of the Spirit (6:17), and to pray at all times in the Spirit (6:20).
- **The _____ supremacy _____ of the Lord Jesus**: God has purposed to sum up all things in heaven and earth in Christ (1:10). Thus, we must know Him and His power (1:17, 19). God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand, far above all other powers, not only in this age but also in the age to come (1:21-23). Everything in God's dealings with us centers in the person and work of Jesus Christ and our organic unity of being "in Him" or "in Christ."

7. **The Salutation of the Book of Ephesians.** (1:1-2)

- Paul tells us who he was in Christ & how he came to be that way: ___ **Apostle** ___ by the will of God. (v. 1a)
- Paul describes believers and tells us who we are and how we can to be that way: _____ **Saints** _____ who are faithful in Christ Jesus. (v. 1b)
- Paul tells us how we all came to experience this great salvation: ___ **Grace** ___ & ___ **Peace** ___ from God & the Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 2)