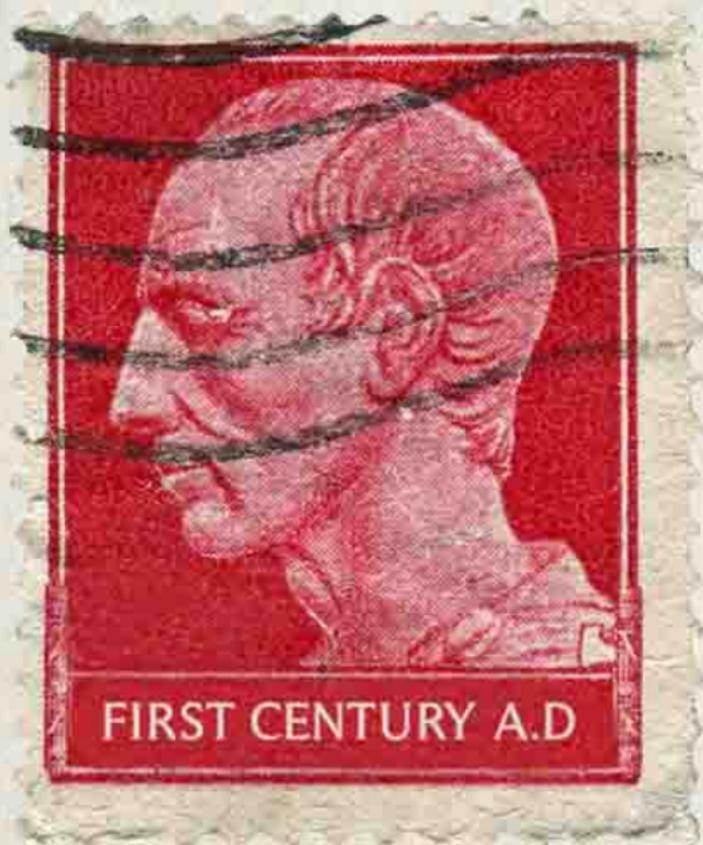


BIBLE STUDY SERIES

EPHESIANS

EXPLAINED



WAKE UP AMERICA SEMINARS
Proclaiming the Revelation of Jesus

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My goal in this commentary is to allow Paul to do most of the talking. I have inserted italics and brackets in Scripture quotations to enhance understanding and follow Paul's logic, not to change the meaning. For best results, refer to your favorite translation as you read.

May God bless you as you study this fascinating topic!

Larry Wilson

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Ephesians – Explained

Introduction

Paul wrote the book of Ephesians from a prison in Rome about A.D. 62. Most of the believers in Ephesus were Gentile converts. Jewish apologists were creating problems in Ephesus by advocating Jewish traditions. The apologists advocated Jewish traditions and Paul confronted their efforts with this epistle. The apologists had also caused problems in Galatia and this is why Paul wrote a letter to them. Paul's tone in the book of Ephesians is not as abrasive as in the book of Galatians, but his counsel is just as wise and penetrating. As you consider Paul's counsel to the Ephesians, keep in mind that Jesus confronted the church at Ephesus 33 years later for having let go of its "first love" for Him.¹

The book of Ephesians has three main topics: First, Paul wanted the believers to know the Father predestined a time in world history when Gentiles would be given the same rights as adopted sons of God as the Jews without becoming Jewish! Second, Paul wanted the Ephesians to know Jesus has given spiritual gifts to believers so His church will flourish. These gifts are recognized as servants of Jesus, apostles, proph-

¹ Revelation 2:4

ets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Third, Paul wanted believers to know Jesus is glorified in His people when they reflect His holy character. Everyone professing to be a Christian should often read the last three chapters of Ephesians.

Competing Theories

Fatalism is a concept teaching “whatever will be – will be.” There are variations within this concept, but the root of fatalism is built on guessing what purpose, if any, coincidences may have. Fatalism has a thousand questions and very few answers. On the other hand, predestination is a concept teaching that a higher power has mapped out every event in advance. There are no coincidences and every event has purpose and meaning, but like fatalism, what is its purpose? Of course, there are various understandings of predestination and it is ironic that the logical end to predestination is very close to that of fatalism, “whatever has been predestined – will be.”

One school of thought within predestination balances the Father’s perfect foreknowledge, His divine purpose, and the free will of human beings. Paul does not explain this topic as well as John, but both Bible writers are in perfect harmony. Evidently there was some controversy about predestination in Ephesus and ac-

According to his style, Paul wasted no time jumping into the topic in Chapter 1. John and other Bible writers present information on predestination which Paul did not address. Once you properly understand the balance between God’s foreknowledge, His purpose, and His respect for our free will, Ephesians 1 and 2 will be easier to understand.

The Father Foreknew Everything

Any government has “top secret” information. Many corporations also have “top secret” information which they rigorously protect, because highly sensitive information can have unintended or harmful consequences if the information is prematurely released. The Father is omniscient (all knowing). He foreknew Lucifer and his followers would rebel and be expelled from heaven before the angels were created. The Father foreknew the details surrounding the fall of Adam and Eve before Earth was created. He foreknew Cain would kill Abel. The Father foreknew Jesus’ death on the cross; even the names and actions of the religious leaders and soldiers who participated in His death. All these details were included in a book which He wrote *before* the creation of the universe.

The Father included highly sensitive information in His book which necessitates the utmost security until

the time comes to reveal the data. This explains why He physically sealed His book seven times after completing the book. Looking thousands of years into the future, the Father foreknew who would chose to be saved from the penalty for sin and who would not. He foreknew the eternal destiny each angel would choose and wrote it down before any of them were created. The Father also blotted out the *names* (but not the life record) of those who will be destroyed by fire at the end of the 1,000 years. So, His book will endure as a changeless testimony for all eternity to come.

Given the sensitive nature of this information, you may wonder why the Father would write it down. He foreknew if this information were exposed prematurely or fell into the hands of his adversaries, He would never escape taunts of ridicule and condemnation. The charges, “God is not a God of love” could be repeated throughout eternity because he predestined certain angels and certain human beings to be saved and others to be destroyed. The charge would include, “He even wrote the results before they were created!” His adversaries would say, “Look! He is condemned by His own words! He created and manipulated His subjects according to His will. His subjects do not have free will, the power of choice or any control over their destiny.” There are several prob-

lems with these accusations. First and foremost, there is a great gulf between foreknowing and making your foreknowledge come to pass.

The Father put a plan in motion to exonerate Himself from any hint of wrongdoing that could arise in the future. After writing the book and sealing it seven times, he stored it as a “time capsule” in heaven’s vault. Then, at the dawn of Creation, certain angels were assigned to serve as recording angels. These angels were given special “recorders” that record life in real time. These recorders are fed information in real time by the Holy Spirit who sees everything and reads the mind and heart of each individual. These recordings include our motives, thoughts, knowledge, words, and actions. Nothing is missed. To make matters entirely transparent, the Father predetermined three actions:

First, because the curse of sin would make life unfair for human beings on Earth, each sinner would be given a generous opportunity for eternal life. Second, the Father predetermined that at an appointed time Jesus would, after providing the righteousness needed for salvation and dying on the cross, investigate the life record of each human being. After reviewing each life record, Jesus would determine who would be saved and who would not. Third, the Father predetermined

His book, secured with seven seals, will be opened after two events. Jesus has to finish deciding who will be saved and lost, and also, the saints have to finish deciding the amount of restitution the wicked must repay. Therefore, the Father's book will be opened for everyone to see at the end of the 1,000 years.¹

The Great White Throne Judgment

The Bible teaches that Jesus has been appointed to judge sinners. **“The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.”**² Paul wrote, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”**³ When our case comes before Jesus, He will see and review everything which the angels and Holy Spirit recorded: **“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”**⁴

The answer of what the relationship is between the records made by the recording angels and the book sealed with seven seals may surprise you. At the end of the 1,000 years, the saints who are taken to heaven at the Second Coming will descend within the Holy

1 Revelation 20:12

2 John 5:22

3 2 Corinthians 5:10

4 Ecclesiastes 12:14

City as it comes down from heaven. After the “dust settles,” all the wicked will be resurrected so everyone who has ever lived on Earth will be alive and present at that moment. The total population of Earth from all ages, together with all of the angels (including Lucifer and his angels) will be in attendance. Jesus and the Father will be seated on a high and glorious white throne that shines brighter than the sun. When everyone has gathered, Jesus will stand and a hush will fall over the numberless host. Solemnity and sobriety will fill the atmosphere.

Our glorious Creator will call for the recordings made by the Holy Spirit and the angels. The Bible calls the recordings “books.”¹ These books will be opened and, suddenly, all created beings will watch a vivid panorama. Each person will see a movie of his life, including his motives, thoughts, words, and actions as they happened. Each being will also see his many responses to the Holy Spirit showing whether there was habitual submission or rebellion. As the movie continues, each person will see the Father’s Plan of Salvation. The wicked angels will see the patience and grace extended to them in heaven before their rebellion reached the point of no return. Each human will see what the Father did to save repentant sinners. Everyone will see the birth, ministry,

1 Daniel 7:9-10

suffering, and death of Jesus when He came to Earth. All will be overwhelmed with God's love for sinners.

Finally, each angel and human being will be informed about his eternity destiny. Each person will watch the process of his own judgment which occurred prior to the Second Coming. The angels were tested and judged before Earth was created.¹ Each person will actually see the moment when Jesus examined his life and determined his destiny. Each person will observe the joy in heaven that followed during the judgment for those who were declared righteous and the sorrow for those who could not be saved. At the end of this panoramic presentation, all created beings (angels and humans alike) will fall to the ground before Jesus. The words of Isaiah will be fulfilled:

“By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, “In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.” All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord and make their boast in him.”²

¹ For more information about this, see wake-up.org/studies

² Isaiah 45:23-25

The righteous within the Holy City will fall on their faces before Jesus saying something like this, “Lord Jesus! I can’t believe you saved me! I do not deserve the gift of eternal life or even the lowest place in your kingdom. I am totally undone by your selfless sacrifice and the gift of your righteousness. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb of God who took away my sin. My salvation belongs to You, the Lamb of God who was slain for me.”

The wicked outside the Holy City will also fall on their faces before Jesus saying something like this, “Lord God Almighty! Your judgment is righteous and true. The evidence is impeccable, the record is true and your judgment is righteous. You have treated me with generosity. You gave me life and You gave me opportunity. My repeated rebellion against the Holy Spirit was my own doing and I own the consequences of my behavior. I am a sinner without a Savior. I am what I am. I cannot change my sinful state. I am the person I chose to become.”

Seventh Seal Broken

After the “This is Your Life” movie has ended, Jesus will tell the numberless crowd to stand and He will approach a glorious table. He will lift up the huge book the Father wrote before anything was created.

The book of Revelation calls it, “The Lamb’s Book of Life”¹ after Jesus was found worthy to receive it. At the end of the thousand years, the Book of Life will have just one of seven seals remaining. After Jesus explains the origin and nature of the book, He will break open the final seal. Another movie lasting about a half hour will then occur. Everyone will gaze at a giant panorama in the sky and watch the contents of the book displayed! A great revelation will sweep over the crowd as everyone sees that the Father’s book is *identical* to the books of records prepared by the Holy Spirit and the recording angels in real time. Amazingly, everyone will see the names of angels and human beings which were blotted out of the book even before they were created! This information is no longer sensitive since all judgment has been completed.

Each angel and person has already admitted to Jesus that His judgment was righteous and true. Each wicked angel and wicked human being will find his life record perfectly recorded in the Book of Life, but he will find his name blotted out! Each righteous person will also find his life perfectly recorded in the Book of Life, but his sins were blotted out by the righteousness of Jesus! All that remains is his name! What a stunning revelation! The Father foreknew, be-

¹ Revelation 21:27

fore created beings existed, who would choose to be inside the Holy City or outside the Holy City.

Three Facts about Foreknowledge

Of course, volumes could be written on this matter, but there are three facts that can be distilled from this once-in-an-eternity moment. First, the Father will prove that his foreknowledge is perfect. He foreknew everything about everyone before anyone was created. Identical histories, one written before Creation and the other written in real time, will prove this fact.

Second, because identical histories exist in writing, the Father will be exonerated from the accusation that He manipulated the eternal destiny of His subjects. While He foreknew the rise of sin, motives, thoughts, words, and actions of everyone, He also gave everyone free will and the freedom to exercise this free will. He even emptied heaven's storehouse and paid the price for sin so each repentant sinner could have eternal life! Therefore, the presence of two groups standing before the throne, one saved and the other condemned, proves personal choice determined the eternal destiny for each individual.

Remember, by this time each angel and person has admitted that Jesus carefully and generously judged him in righteousness and truth. Everyone has already

confessed that Jesus took into account everything possible in order to save to the utmost. Everyone knows firsthand that Jesus judged fairly. Ironically, the wicked are shut out of the Holy City because they chose to shut out the voice of the Holy Spirit and the righteous are inside the Holy City because they submitted to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Third, it is important to understand that the Father does not judge anyone. He, as the author of the Book of Life, did not determine the eternal destiny of anyone. The Father appointed Jesus, who does not have foreknowledge,¹ to be the judge of mankind. This is because Jesus has walked in our shoes. He knows what life is like on Earth as a human being and the Father ordained that human beings would be judged by someone who was tempted in all points as sinners are and who overcame every temptation. This is both righteous and fair. Additionally, the Father has not permitted Jesus to know what is written in “The Book of Life.” As our judge, Jesus has to examine each person’s record on its own merit. The Father ordained that Jesus must judge the record of each person’s life before millions of watching angels as intelligent, reasoning witnesses. The Father did this because He wants the holy angels to understand His judicial sys-

¹ For further information, go to the following link: wake-up.org/studies

tem, and to observe how deliberate, careful, and generous Jesus is in judging every case.

Remember, these angels will live with the Father and Jesus throughout eternity. Therefore, if trust, faith, and love for God and His government is to endure forever, the Father and Jesus must do everything in open and transparent ways. Not even the slightest hint of inappropriate behavior can be found in God's ways or given enough time, such knowledge will fester into another rebellion.

Think about this: If Jesus had foreknowledge and knew what the Father had written in "The Book of Life" and the outcome of Jesus' judgment perfectly aligned with what the Father wrote, everyone would quickly detect a scam. The judgment of sinners would be a charade. The Father and Son would be co-conspirators, one defending the other by making the Father's predictions come true. Most of all, if this were the case, the devil and his followers would be exonerated for rebelling against the Father and Jesus!

Foreknowledge Is Not Predestination

Many people have trouble separating God's foreknowledge from predestination. If a person sets the alarm on the clock for 6 p.m., he predestines the alarm will sound at 6 p.m. If another person enters the room

and sees the clock alarm is set for 6 p.m., he has foreknowledge, but his foreknowledge has nothing to do with causing the event that is scheduled for 6 p.m. Because the Father has perfect foreknowledge, He predestined events to occur before the creation of the universe including a wonderful plan to save repentant sinners. However, the Father has predestined no one's eternal destiny. This is vitally important to understand. The Father sets times and dates for events¹ by His own authority and He has predestined the fulfillment of certain purposes and plans. However, He works through beings who have free will and the power of choice. **“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”**² Once you understand that the Father's purposes and corporate plans are one thing and our response to the Holy Spirit is our choice, the topics of God's foreknowledge and predestination come together in perfect harmony.

Paul addresses foreknowledge and predestination in the first part of his epistle to the church at Ephesus. As you read, look for what the Father has predestined and the result that follows if a person *chooses* to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Acts 1:7

² Revelation 22:17

Chapter 1

Ephesians 1:1-3: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to God’s holy people in Ephesus, [who remains steadfast and] **the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in [from his throne in] the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in [through] Christ.**”

Ephesians 1:4-6: “[Foreknowing the curse of sin and that all have sinned] **For he [the Father] chose [to make] us [who believe] in him [Jesus] before the creation of the world to be [made] holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us [sinners] for [redemption and] adoption to [legal] sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves [Jesus, the Lamb of God].**”

Ephesians 1:7-10: “**In him [Jesus] we [sinners] have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he [the Father] lavished on us. With all**

wisdom and understanding, he [the Father has] made known to us [believers in Jesus] the mystery of his will [through Israel's prophets] according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in [through] Christ [before the world was created], to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment – [The Father predestined before the world was created that at an appointed time, he would put everything] to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

Paul mentions an event that few people appreciate. The Father predetermined before the world was created, that in 1798, Jesus would be revealed in heaven as an equal of the Father. To do this, the Father would put everything in heaven and on Earth under Jesus' control. The knowledge of His plan, called *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, has been slowly advancing on Earth since 1798. During the Great Tribulation, the revelation of all that Jesus is will unfold dramatically.

The Father wants the universe to know that Jesus is a self-existing God; He has all the powers and prerogatives of deity just like Himself. This matter is very important to un-

derstand because other than His time on the Father's throne, Jesus lives in subjection to the Father. At the end of the 1,000 years, Jesus will step down from the Father's throne and once again live in subjection to the Father. Consider Paul's words:

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he ‘has [set a time to] put everything under his feet.’ Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put under him [Jesus], it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he [Jesus] has done this [destroyed death itself], then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God [the Father] may be all in all.”¹

1 1 Corinthians 15:22-28

Ephesians 1:11-12: In him [Jesus] we [Jews, the offspring of Abraham] were also chosen, having been predestined [selected] according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we [Jewish converts], who were the first to put our [find the] hope [of salvation] in [through] Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”

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Ephesians 1:13-17: “And you [Gentile believers] also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed [in God's Son], you were

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, For more information, refer to wake-up.org/studies

marked in him with a seal [your adoption as sons was manifested by], the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the [day of] redemption [occurs. All who follow Jesus are] of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory. For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”

Ephesians 1:18-23: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know [and understand] the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in [for] his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God [our Father has] placed all things under his [Christ’s] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the

church,¹ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Chapter 2

Ephesians 2:1-3: “[Now, dear brothers, I need to address a spiritual matter that is racial and inflammatory in nature.] **As for [all of] you,** [there was a time when], **you were dead in your transgressions and sins** [that is, you were spiritually dead, unaware of your true condition before God and unaware of God’s amazing grace and truth, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, or the Father’s love manifested for sinners through the ministry and death of Jesus], **in which you used to live** [according to your carnal instincts and sinful desires] **when you followed the ways of this world and of [Lucifer] the ruler of the kingdom of the air, [he is] the [demonic] spirit who is now at work in those who are** [spiritually dead and] **disobedient. All of us also lived among them** [and like them – the pagans] **at one time,** [we lived] **gratifying the cravings of our flesh** [sinful nature] **and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of [God’s coming] wrath** [for wickedness].”

1 Matthew 28:18

Ephesians 2:4-7: “**But because of his great love for us, God [the Father], who is rich in mercy, [changed us. Through the gospel of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, He] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – [therefore, you must never forget that] it is by [His] grace you have been saved. And God [the Father] raised us up [from the dead – spiritually speaking] with Christ and seated us [as sons – spiritually speaking] with him in the heavenly realms in [through] Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages [after the drama with sin ends] he might [forever] show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in [through] Christ Jesus.**”

Ephesians 2:8-9: “**For it is by grace you have been saved [made alive spiritually], through faith [in Jesus] – and this [power] is [did] not [come] from [within] yourselves [you did not raise yourself from the dead], it [the spiritual life you now have] is the gift of God – not by works [no one can possibly do this on his own], so that no one can boast.**”

Ephesians 2:10-12: “**For we [Jews and Gentiles alike] are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works [for one another], which God**

prepared in advance [predetermined] **for us to do.** **Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called** [ridiculed as] **‘uncircumcised’** by [the apologists, are no different than] **those who call themselves** [boast they are] **‘the circumcision’** (which [the circumcision of which the Jews boast] **is done in the body by human hands**) – [and we know this is now meaningless. Also] **remember that at that time** [before Jesus died or you heard about Him] **you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners** [ignorant of] **to the covenants of the promise** [which God gave to and through Israel], **without hope and without God in the world.** [In other words, before you Gentiles heard about Jesus, you were nothing and had nothing – spiritually speaking.]”

Ephesians 2:13-16: **“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near** [to the Father] **by** [through] **the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups** [races into] **one and has destroyed the** [religious] **barrier, the dividing wall of hostility** [that kept us apart], **by setting aside** [abolishing] **in his flesh the** [Levitical] **law with its commands and regulations** [the laws which formerly made us two separate and distinct races]. **His purpose** [with the

new covenant] **was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two** [races], **thus making peace** [between us], **and in one body** [the body of Jesus] **to reconcile both of them** [both races] **to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility** [Jesus abolished the Levitical system which terminated the racial/spiritual divide].”

Ephesians 2:17-22: “He [Jesus] came and preached peace to you [Gentiles] **who were far away** [from his gospel] **and peace to those** [Jews] **who were near** [to his gospel, but were nevertheless steeped in tradition and ignorance]. **For through him [Jesus] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you** [Gentiles] **are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of his household** [Christ’s church which is], **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building** [all peoples] **is [are] joined together** [as one body] **and [his church] rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together** [with the rest of the believers] **to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”**

Chapter 3

Ephesians 3:1-4: “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation [from Jesus], as I have already written briefly.”

Ephesians 3:4-9: “In reading this [epistle], then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless [infinite] riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God [but was predestined by the Father to be exposed at this time], **who created [designed] all things.**”

Ephesians 3:10-12: “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known [also] to the rulers and authorities [the angels] in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

Ephesians 3:13-19: “I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 3:20-21: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Chapter 4

Ephesians 4:1-3: “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 4:4-10: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he took many captives in his and gave gifts to his people.’ (What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe [with the glory of the Father].)”

Paul quotes a Messianic prophecy found in Psalm 68: **“When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious [sinners] – that you, Lord God, might dwell there.”**¹ Paul is bringing up the point that when Jesus died, several people were resurrected: **“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.”**²

The Father commanded this special resurrection and to overcome the lies of the Pharisees that the disciples had stolen Jesus’ body,³ the Father raised some dead people to prove that resurrection was possible. The Father also raised dead people so Jesus could present Himself with these saints as firstfruits from the dead.⁴ Finally, the Father raised these dead people so 24 of them (described in the book of Revelation as 24 elders) could serve in heaven’s court.

1 Psalms 68:18

2 Matthew 27:51-53

3 Matthew 28:11-15

4 1 Corinthians 15:20-21; Hebrews 2:13

Therefore, when Jesus ascended, He led “many captives” as He approached the Father. These captives were formerly dead people, that is, “captives liberated from their tombs.” The 24 elders were chosen from this group and were given a high honor in heaven to serve as witnesses during Christ’s judgment of mankind. Since there are 12 tribes, two elders were chosen from each tribe making 24 witnesses. The title “elder” means “someone ordained by God to serve his brothers and sisters.”¹ Therefore, after eternity begins and if a saint questions why someone was not saved, two witnesses will affirm the fairness and transparency of Christ’s verdict.²

Ephesians 4:11-13: “[It was customary in Bible times for a victorious king returning from war to show his love and affection for his people by generously giving them gifts as he paraded his troops through the city. Jesus did something similar at his ascension. After He had overcome every temptation and cast Lucifer out of heaven, Jesus gave generous gifts to His believers on Earth.] **So Christ himself gave [some people to be] the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to**

¹ Titus 1:6-9

² See 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 18:16

equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:14-15: “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

Ephesians 4:16-19: “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you [who were formerly Gentiles] must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind

of impurity, and they are full of greed.”

Ephesians 4:20-24: “That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:25-30: “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Ephesians 4:31-32: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Chapter 5

Ephesians 5:1-3: “Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”

Ephesians 5:4-7: “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a person is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.”

Ephesians 5:8-12: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of

light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.”

Ephesians 5:13-16: “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are [full of] evil.”

Ephesians 5:17-20: “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21-27: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is

the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Ephesians 5:28-33: “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church – for we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

Chapter VI

Ephesians 6:1-4: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ – which is the first commandment with a

promise – ‘so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:5-9: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.”

Ephesians 6:10-12: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Ephesians 6:13-17: “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you

have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Ephesians 6:18-20: “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

Ephesians 6:21-24: “Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything [when he delivers this letter], so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.”

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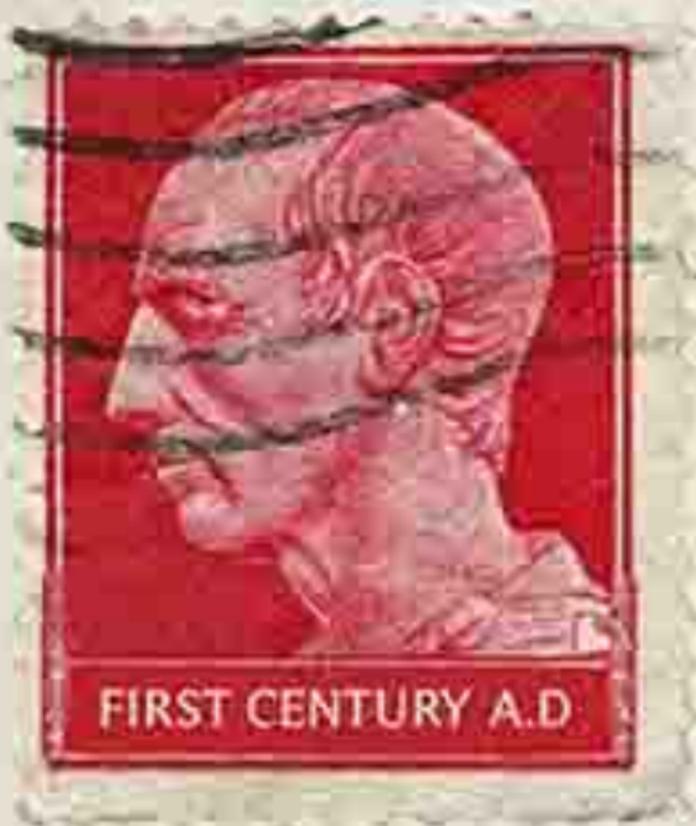


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