

Ephesians and Colossians

Gods' Eternal Purpose in Jesus Christ



Ephesus: Theater and Street Ruins (Credit Inside)

Notes and Commentary

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Asia Minor: Ephesus, Theater and Street Ruins

The Theater at Ephesus was able to seat up to 25,000 spectators. It was completed in its present form under Trajan. It was here in A.D. 57 that Demetrius' protest against the Apostle Paul took place in which the Ephesians cried out for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians". Ephesus was the second largest city in the Roman Empire at c 250,000 people.

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1. Background and Introduction

Ephesians and Colossians have in common their geographic location in Asia Minor and their common theme of God's eternal purpose in Christ and in the church. Although Colosse is not mentioned outside the letter to the Colossians, written to them by Paul, it was just south of the more notable Laodicea. This proximity suggests that similar problems with the church at Laodicea might have existed. The Lord addressed the church at Laodicea in one of his seven letters in Revelation 3:14-22. Later, this study will note that Paul encouraged Colosse and Laodicea to exchange letters.

Of Ephesus, the scriptures are more illuminating and shed light on the region of Asia Minor that included Colosse also.

The Common Theme of the Books

The great commonality of these two churches is how the letters written to them by Paul focus on Christ and the church as they fulfill God's eternal purpose. This importance is overwhelming, since the letters focus on the one Lord and the one church. These letters reveal an unchanging Lord, an unchanging church, and an unchanging truth, forever excluding the multiplicity of churches and modern denominations with their multiple and universal ways of salvation.

Inspiration reveals the eternal nature and unity of this thesis in each book: For Ephesians, the thesis statement is in Eph 1:9-10:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

The thesis of Colossians, which is similar in wording and exact in meaning, reads in Col 1:19-20:

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

No other Christ reigns; no other plan will suffice; no other doctrine will instruct.



Paul's Interaction with the Church of Ephesus

Paul first arrived in Ephesus in Acts 18:18-22, where he left Priscilla and Aquila and sailed on to conclude his missionary journey at Antioch. When Paul returned to Ephesus in Acts 19:1-7, he taught those who were baptized in the baptism of John to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus:

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

This passage alone illustrates the unity of the doctrine of Christ as it demands a specific baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. No other teaching on baptism will do.

In Acts 19:23-27, the silversmiths assaulted Paul and the disciples at Ephesus, verbally and physically, for their opposition to idolatry. In Acts 20:16-19, Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus to Miletus where he spoke of the impending apostasy in Acts 20:27-31:

27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

It was at Ephesus that Paul fought wild beasts, according to 1 Cor 15:32.

The Lord's Letter to Ephesus in Rev 2:1-7

Evidently, by the time that John wrote his letter in Rev 2:1-7, the Ephesian church had overcome the influence of idolatry and false apostles and the general wickedness toward which most of Paul's letter aimed. That they had left their first love, perhaps, speaks to their lukewarm departure for the truth

2 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: 2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not

repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. 6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The Lord's Letter to Laodicea

At the end of Paul's letter to the Colossians in Col 4:16, he tells them to exchange their letter with the one that he wrote to the Laodiceans:

16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

This letter by Paul to Laodicea has long since disappeared. However, John did record a letter to the Laodiceans. Since Laodicea was only 10 miles north of Colosse, the Lord's letter to the Laodiceans in Rev 3:14-22 may reflect the regional influences on the church at Colosse:

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Outline of Lessons from Ephesians and Colossians

1. Background and Introduction
2. God's Eternal Purpose in Christ – Ephesians 1:1-10
3. God's Eternal Purpose in the Church – Ephesians 1:11-23
4. Salvation by Grace through Faith – Ephesians 2:1-10
5. Reconciliation in Christ and in the Church – Ephesians 2:11-22
6. The Revelation of God's Mystery – Ephesians 3
7. The Unity of the Spirit through the Bond of Peace – Ephesians 4:1-16
8. Children of Light in the Lord – Ephesians 4:17 through 5:20
9. Strength in the Lord and His Mighty Power – Ephesians 5:21 through 6:24
10. The Fullness of God Dwelling in Christ – Colossians 1
11. Human Laws and Regulations Rejected – Colossians 2

12. Hearts Set on Things above in Everything – Colossians 3

13. Final Instructions and Close – Colossians 4

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:9-10: What did God make known to us? What things did he bring together? In whom were they brought together?
2. Col 1:19-20: In whom does all fullness dwell? What things were reconciled to God? Through what was peace made?
3. Acts 18:18-22: Whom did Paul leave at Ephesus? Where did Paul go?
4. Acts 19:1-7: What baptism were the Ephesians practicing? In whose baptism did Paul instruct them? How did they respond?
5. Acts 19:23-27: Why did the silversmiths turn on Paul and the faithful Christians?
6. Acts 20:16-19: What was the duty of the elders at Ephesus? Who was going to come into the church? From where would these men arise?
7. 1 Cor 15:32: What special trial did Paul face at Ephesus?
8. Rev 2:1-7: What were the number of good things the church at Ephesus had done? What did the Lord hold against them? What were they told to do? What reward did the Lord promise to them who overcame?
9. Col 4:16: With whom were the Colossians to exchange letters?
10. Rev 3:14-22: Why would the spit the Laodiceans out of his mouth? What did the Lord counsel them to buy? Whom does the Lord rebuke and discipline? What did he promise them who overcame?

2. God’s Eternal Purpose in Christ—Ephesians 1:1-10

The first lesson, which was the introduction to *God’s Eternal Purpose in Christ and in the Church: A Study of Ephesians and Colossians*, identified the theme of these two epistles by stating: “The great commonality of these letters to these two churches focuses on Christ and the church as they fulfill God’s eternal purpose.” The first ten verses of Ephesians focus on God’s eternal purpose as it was fulfilled in Christ. The rest of the verses in Ephesians 1 focus on the church as the fullness of Christ in God’s eternal purpose.

Introduction—Eph 1:1-2

Eph 1:1-2

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As was his custom Paul names himself an apostle, establishing the authority by which he speaks. The phrase—by the will of God—further strengthens Paul’s claim to authority. Of course, this church would remember the case that he made for himself in Acts 20:17-21:

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Paul’s prayer was that God’s grace (unmerited favor) and peace (with God, with other people, and with themselves) be with them from the Father and the son, Jesus Christ.

Every Spiritual Blessing in Christ—Eph 1:3

Eph 1:3

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The older versions have readings that are different in meaning from the NIV. For example, the American Standard Version reads verse 3: “Blessed (be) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly (places) in Christ. “ *Blessed* more aptly expresses an abiding characteristic of God, separate from anything man can do, where *praised* implies man as the actor in the passive voice. If one eliminates the *be* as it is in the Greek, an eternally blessed God emerges with power to bless all of human kind.

The NIV reading is also problematic in the phrase *blessed us in the heavenly realms*, implying the place from which the blessings are received. The original language favors the American Standard Version which reads: blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. The very strong implication of the latter is that man receives blessings from God and in Christ that are characteristic of the blessed God, Himself.

What follows in the rest of the first ten verses is an eloquent description of those spiritual blessings which emanate only from God and in Christ. In fact, there are 12 references to God and 9 references to Christ in these 10 verses in the NIV. These spiritual blessings from heavenly places from God and in Christ deny by their very power any human origin.

He Chose Us in Him – Eph 1:4-6

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

The wonder here is that God chose humankind before the creation of the world to be holy and without blemish. Although one may never fully know the workings of an all-powerful God, the scriptures themselves give insight into how God chose his children before the foundation of the world.

Rom 8:28-30 teaches that those he foreknew, he predestined; those he predestined, he called:

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Those called according to God’s purpose – those he foreknew and predestined – were those to be conformed to the likeness of his son. 2 Thess 2:13-15 says that from the beginning the chosen are the saved, called to this through the gospel:

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

Later, Eph 1:11-13 teaches that these predestined, these chosen, and these called were included in Christ when they heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation:

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your

salvation.

What a wonderful blessing to be adopted as a son of God.

In Him We Have Redemption— Eph 1:7-8

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Just the choosing and adopting as sons required hearing and obeying the word of truth on man's part, so their redemption, the forgiveness of sins required the blood of Jesus on his part. Peter describes this most precious spiritual blessing in 1 Peter 1:18-21

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

He Purposed His Will in Christ: Eph 1:9-10

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

The mystery of God's will is that although God predetermined before the foundation of the world, he made known his will according to his good pleasure, putting that good pleasure of God into effect at the fullness of times. That God has summed up all things in heaven and earth in Christ, precludes any latter day revelations from God and any latter modifications by man through the various denominational strategies for altering the gospel.

Not only is the content set forever by the predetermined will of God, but also the time when God fulfilled his will is set at the time of Christ coming. Jesus began with this declaration in Mark 1:14-15:

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Gal 4:4-6 teaches that *the time had fully come*:

4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

God fulfilled his eternal purpose in Christ when time was fulfilled.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:1-2: Who wrote the letter? To whom did he write it? What was the writer's prayer?
2. Acts 20:17-21: How did Paul live? How did Paul preach? What did Paul declare to Greeks and Jews alike?
3. Eph 1:3: What blessing has God given his people? In whom are they given?
4. Eph 1:4-6: When did God choose us? What were we chosen to be? What did God predestine?

5. Rom 8:28-30: According to whose purpose are we called? Who were those he called? Who were those he justified? Who were those he glorified?
6. 2 Thess 2:13-15: Through what are we called? In what do we share?
7. Eph 1:11-13: What must we hear to be included in Christ?
8. Eph 1:7-8: In whom do we have our redemption? Through what does it come?
9. 1 Peter 1:18-21: With what are we redeemed?
10. Eph 1:9-10: What did God make known to us? When did he make it known?
11. Mark 1:14-15: What did Jesus begin preaching?
12. Gal 4:4-5: When did God send his son? What do we receive?

3. God's Eternal Purpose in the Church—Ephesians 1:11-23

The last lesson, *God's Eternal Purpose in Christ*, showed how God chose us in Christ to fulfill his eternal purpose (Eph 1:1-10). Now, this lesson from Eph 1:11-23 shows how the church also fulfills God's eternal purpose—calling the church the fullness of him that fills all in all (Eph 1:23). God fulfilled his eternal purpose in both Christ and the church.

Predestined according to God's Plan

Eph 1:11-12

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:4-5 began this discourse by showing how God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world. Paul described this as predestined to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ. The passage reads:

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— (Eph 1:4-5).

Lesson one illustrated how we are chosen through the gospel—a plan which refutes modern ideas of predestination and retains a free moral agency for all human kind as they choose to obey the gospel. Now in Eph 1:11-12, Paul returns to explain exactly how God chose us. The predestination of God's word is according to God's plan and conforms to the purpose of his will. The purpose of his will is a mystery, purposed in Christ, according to Eph 1:9-10: "9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ," In is only by God's plan of salvation and in Christ that we can ever be saved. Acts 4:12 teaches: "12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Included in Christ When They Heard the Word of Truth

Eph 1:13-14

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a

deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.

God's plan includes individuals in Christ when they hear the word of truth—described as the *gospel of your salvation*—and believe it with obedient faith. At the point of obeying, Christians received the gift of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of their inheritance. The Lord described the word of truth as the word of God in John 17:17-19:

17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

This word of truth instructs that those who are children are baptized into Christ in Gal 3:26-27:

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Our text also describes the word of truth as the gospel of our salvation. Of that gospel, Paul said that it is the power of God unto salvation in Rom 1:16-17:

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

The gospel, the word of truth, belief, obedience, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit—all these are elements of the plan of salvation coming together in our text and in Acts 2:38 where the hearers cut to the heart ask what they should do: “38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This plan of salvation is the one spoken of above in verse 11: “. . . according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”

His Glorious Inheritance in the Saints

Eph 1:15-19a

15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 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. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

In this passage Paul's expresses his prayer for the saints at Ephesus—a custom that Paul followed in most of his letters. Paul prays that the Father give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Through these, Christians may know God better. These gifts, wisdom and revelation, are available to Christians today, helping them to know God better.

James tells Christians to pray for wisdom in James 1:5: “5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” James, further, describes this wisdom in James 3:17: “17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”

As regards to revelation, Paul tells Christians how to receive it in Eph 3:2-5:

. . . 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 **In reading this, then, you will be able to understand** my insight into the

mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. [Emphasis added.]

What Christians pray for is the insight to understand what God revealed in the scriptures. On man's part, it takes reading the scriptures to comprehend the Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, according to Col 2:2-3

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

God's Power Exalted in Christ

Eph 1:19b-21

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

The greatest spiritual blessing is the power that God extended when he raised Christ from the dead. The fact that Christ is now above all things destroys the foundation of the millennial arguments, which teach that there will be a future earthly reign. According to this passage, Christ already reigns above all things, having been raised to this exalted position. He is now above all things in this age and the one to come. He is complete with nothing lacking.

Christ the Head over Everything for the Church

Eph 1:22-23

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Just as Christ is complete with nothing lacking, so is his church. A church that is the fullness of Christ does not need the enhancements and modifications of denominationalism and sectarianism with their additions to God's purpose and revelation. Indeed, the one body is as binding as the one Lord is binding. This plan of salvation conceived by God before the foundation of the world is unalterable. Eph 4:3-6, which summarizes the single nature of God's plan of salvation, commands religious unity in the 21st century world:

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:1-10: In whom is God's eternal purpose fulfilled?
2. Eph 1:11-23: In what is God's eternal purpose fulfilled?
3. Eph 1:11-12: By what plan were we chosen? According to whose will were we chosen?
4. Ephesians 1:4-5: In whom did God choose us? When did he choose us?
5. Acts 4:12: Where is salvation found? In whose name are we saved?

6. Eph 1:13-14: When were we included in Christ? What is the word of truth?
7. John 17:17-19: Whose word is truth?
8. Gal 3:26-27: How do we get into Christ?
9. Rom 1:16-17: What is the power of God for salvation?
- 10 Acts 2:38: What is God's plan of salvation?
11. Eph 1:15-19a: For what two things did Paul pray for on behalf of the Ephesians?
12. James 1:5: What are we to do for wisdom?
13. James 3:17: What is wisdom from heaven?
14. Eph 3:2-5: How do we gain insight into the mystery of Christ?
15. Col 2:2-3: Where are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden?
16. Eph 1:19b-21: To where was Christ raised? What is he over?
17. Eph 1:22-23: What is under Christ's feet? What is the fullness of Christ?

4. Salvation by Grace through Faith—Ephesians 2:1-10

Paul has previously shown that God’s eternal purpose was in Christ (Eph 1:1-10) and in the church (Eph 1:11-23). The first chapter ended with a declarative statement of how God summed up all things in Christ and his church. Speaking of the power of God in fulfilling his eternal purpose, Paul concluded chapter one in Eph 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

In chapter 2, Paul turns to the specifics of God’s eternal plan for redemption of all people in Christ and in the church.

Mankind’s Condition before God’s Plan

Eph 2:1-3

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Eph 2:1-3 outlines the depraved condition of all people outside Christ and his church. Although he begins with the 2nd person pronoun, *you*, speaking to the Ephesians, most of whom would be Gentiles, he switches to the 1st person pronoun, *we*, in verse 3, thus including all Jews and Gentiles alike. “You were dead in your transgressions and sins,” describes the fate of those in the depraved state leading to spiritual death. What follows characterizes all those in this state of spiritual death, brought on by their transgressions and sins:

- They followed the ways of the world.
- They followed the ruler of the kingdom of the air.
- They followed the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.
- They gratified the cravings of our sinful nature.
- They followed the desires and thoughts of their sinful nature.
- They were by nature objects of wrath.

God’s Great Love Extended to the Lost

Eph 2:4-7

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

In the face of man’s depravity, God extended his great love to us, bringing us out of this

depraved state. In addition to his great love, God endowed us with all the spiritual blessings in Christ:

- God is rich in mercy.
- God made us alive even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins.
- God saved us by grace (undeserved favor).
- God raised us up with Christ.
- God seated us with him in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.
- God will show us the remarkable riches of his grace in ages to come.
- God expressed his kindness to us in Jesus Christ.

God's Part: Grace

Eph 2:8

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God –

When we were dead in sins and trespasses, undeserving and lost, God gave us His gift through his son by His infinite grace. That gift given freely by the Father is his son, according to John 3:16-17: “16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” The choice is still ours: we choose spiritual death or eternal life. Paul wrote in Rom 6:23: “3 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In 1 Peter 1:18-21, Peter explained that gift of god and how it fits into God's eternal plan for our redemption:

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Therefore, the Lord redeemed us with his own blood, making the forgiveness of our sins possible. Jesus taught in Matt 26:28-29: “28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Without the shedding of the blood of Christ, there is no forgiveness, according to Heb 9:22: “22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

Man's Part: Obedient Faith

Eph 2:9-10

9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Man's part in Eph 8 quoted above is faith—an obedient faith as asserted in verse 10 above: “10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Paul explains the transition from death to life, by grace through faith, in Rom 6:3-11:

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in

order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Baptism takes us from spiritual death to life with Christ. According to the next verses, Eph 2:8-11, we are dead to sin but alive to God in Christ.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

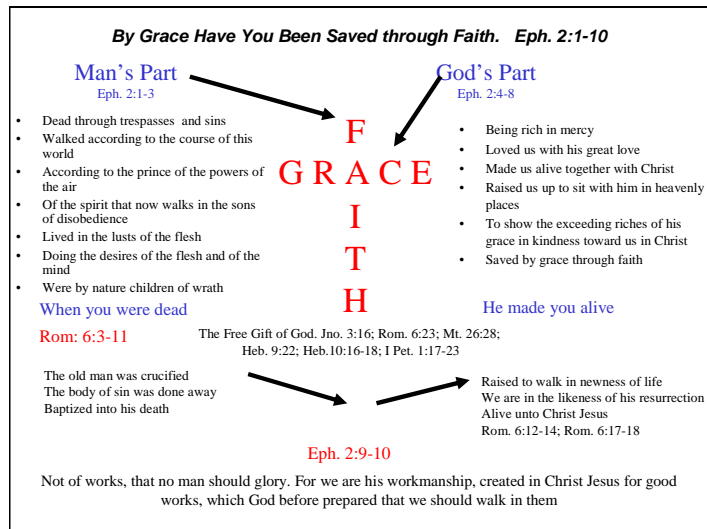
Understanding how blessed we are as spiritual beings, we must not let sin reign once again in our mortal bodies, as Paul taught in Rom 6:12-14:

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

In Rom 6:17-18, Paul reviews the way from sin to righteousness and the obedience that it requires:

17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

This passage so thoroughly agrees with Eph 2:10 that one cannot miss the point—we must obey God, since He created us for good works: “10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” God prepared the works for us in advance. No one can alter them, pervert them, or change them, substituting human wisdom and theology. God’s plan *is* God’s plan.



Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:1-10: In whom did God sum up all things?
2. Eph 1:11-23: What is the extent of Christ’s power and authority? What is the fullness of Christ?
3. Eph 2:1-3: In what were we dead? What ways do non-Christians follow? What do sinners

gratify?

4. Eph 2:4-7: Who has great love for us? Who is rich in mercy? Who made us alive? Where are we seated? In whom did God express his kindness?
5. Eph 2:8: By what are we saved? Through what are we saved? What is God's gift?
6. John 3:16-17: Why did God give his one and only son?
7. Rom 6:23: What is the wages of sin? What is the gift of God?
8. 1 Peter 1:18-21: With what were we redeemed? What is Christ called? When was Christ chosen?
9. Matt 26:28-29: For what was the blood of Christ poured out?
10. Heb 9:22: What is necessary for repentance?
11. Eph 2:9-10: Can you reconcile *not by works* with *created to do good works*?
12. Rom 6:3-11: To what are we raised from baptism? What was done away with in baptism?
13. Eph 2:8-11: In what were we dead? To what were we alive? Rom 6:12-14:
14. Eph 2:12-14: To whom do we offer our bodies? What must we not let reign in our mortal bodies?
15. Rom 6:17-18: What is the way from sin to righteousness?

5. Reconciliation in Christ and in the Church—Ephesians 2:11-22

Previously Paul has shown that God's eternal purpose was in Christ (Eph 1:1-10) and in the church (Eph 1:11-23), stating in plain terms in Eph 1:11b-12 that all this was according to the eternal plan of God:

. . . according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

In Eph 2:1:10, Paul taught that both Gentiles and Jews are saved "by grace through faith." With faith as our part in God's eternal plan of salvation, we must ". . . do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10). Immediately, for the alien sinner, these good works include repentance (Acts 17:30; 2 Pet 3:9), confession of Christ as Lord (Rom 10:10; Matt 10:32-33), and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21). For those who are already children of God, the loving Father has told us to do all the works that he has prepared and delivered to us in the New Testament (Gal 1:6-10; Matt 7:21; 2 Cor 5:10). Through his eternal plan of salvation, God reconciles people unto himself in Christ and in the church.

Reconciliation Comes in Christ and through His Blood

Eph 2:11-22

*11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now **in Christ Jesus** you who once were far away have been brought near **through the blood of Christ.** [Emphasis added]*

In Old Testament times, the Jews, who called themselves *the circumcision*, referred to the Gentiles as *the uncircumcised*. During the Jewish dispensation, which paralleled the Old Testament period of history, the Gentiles were excluded from citizenship in Israel and were foreigners to the covenants made by God with the Israelites; such as, God's covenants of promise with Abraham and David. Of Abraham's promise, Paul wrote in Gal 3:16:

16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

Of David's promise, Peter preached in Acts 2:30-31:

30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

Since the Gentiles were alienated and far away, they had no knowledge of or hope in these promises, even though the promises included "all the nations of the earth." Now, according to verse 13 above, they "have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Paul in his letter to the Colossians wrote in Col 2:11-12 that circumcision done by Christ is the putting off of one's sinful nature and occurs in baptism:

11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12

having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Jesus commanded that this spiritual circumcision through baptism should be extended to all men in Matt 28:19-20:

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Thus, God set the stage for the reconciliation of all men through the Blood of Christ.

God Reconciles Jew and Gentile in One Body, the Church

Eph 2:14-18

*14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and **in this one body** to reconcile both of them to God **through the cross**, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. [Emphasis added]*

Christ made Jew and Gentile one by destroying the barrier—the dividing wall of hostility, which was the Old Testament, with its commands and regulations. Paul restated this principle in Col 2:13b-14

He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Of the two, God made one body, the one body of verse 16 above, and the one body, the church in Eph 1:22-23:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for **the church**, 23 which is **his body**, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. [Emphasis added]

God's reconciliation through the cross and in the body, the church, brought peace and not division, one church not many, excluding any notion of the modern idea of denominationalism. Thus, Paul could write, describing God's reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:17-21:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God Reconciles His People as His Kingdom, as His Household, as His Holy Temple, and as His Household

Eph 2:19-22

*19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but **fellow citizens with God's people** and*

members of **God's household**, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the **whole building** is joined together and rises to become a **holy temple** in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a **dwelling** in which God lives by his Spirit. [Emphasis Added]

“Fellow citizens with God’s people” describes our reconciled relationship in the kingdom of God with Christ on his throne as described in Eph 1:19b-22:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

In Christ’s kingdom, God reconciles us in his household. The words *kingdom* and *household* synonymously describe the saved and their relationship to Christ the king and elder brother and to God the father. The saved are, therefore, the church, the kingdom, and the household of God—words all of which describe God’s people. Paul clearly defines the oneness of all these concepts in 1 Tim 3:14-15:

14 Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

No one can deny the oneness of God’s people: the church is the body; the church is the kingdom; the church is the household of God. The saved are in this one and only church of Christ, which is the body of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, and the household of God. Paul wrote about the saved in the church in Eph 5:25b-27:

. . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Christ cleansed the church and, therefore, the household of God, by washing with water (baptism) through the word.

Just as the last lesson found that we are baptized into Christ’s death (Rom 3:3-6) and raised to walk in newness of life, this lesson teaches that we are baptized into the church and the household of God. Since the church is also the body of Christ, Paul affirmed directly that we need to be baptized into the church and, therefore, into the household of God. There is no other way. In 1 Cor 12:13, Paul wrote:

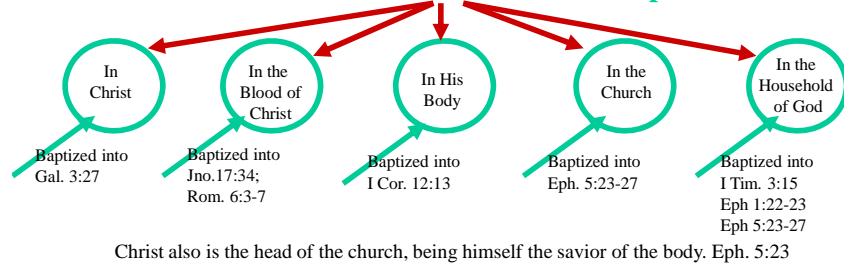
Reconciliation in Christ and in the Church—Eph 2:11-22

The Church: The Fullness of Christ. Eph. 1:22-23: “. . . And gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

Eph. 2:11-22

- Separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. V. 12
- But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. V. 13
- He might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace. V. 15
- (He) might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross. V. 16
- He came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh. V. 17
- You are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. V. 19
- In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit V. 22

The Church: The Fullness of Christ. Eph. 1:22-23



13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

In this way, our God and Father reconciles us to himself in the church. We are also a “holy temple in the Lord.” Peter describes this concept in detail in 1 Peter 2:4-10:

4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . .

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Finally, the church is dwelling where God lives by his Spirit. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 3:16-17:

16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:1-10: In whom was God’s eternal purpose fulfilled?
2. Eph 1:11-23: Who is the fullness of Christ?
3. Eph 1:11b-12: In accord with what is God’s eternal plan worked out?
4. Eph 2:1:10: In what are we saved? Through what are we saved?
5. Eph 2:10: When did God plan the good works that we must do?
6. Acts 17:30; 2 Pet 3:9: What is repentance?
7. Rom 10:10; Matt 10:32-33: What comes to us when we confess with the mouth?
8. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21: Why is baptism essential?
10. Gal 1:6-10; Matt 7:21; 2 Cor 5:10: What kind of lives must Christians live?
11. Eph 2:11-22: In whom are we brought near? Through what?
12. Gal 3:16: Who is the seed of Abraham?
13. Acts 2:30-32: On whose throne does Christ sit?
14. Col 2:11-12: What is spiritual circumcision? Where does it occur?
15. Matt 28:19-20: Who must be baptized?
16. Eph 2:14-18: Into what are we reconciled? Through what are we reconciled?
17. Col 2:13-14: What did God cancel and take out of the way? Where was it nailed?
18. Eph 1:22-23: What is the church?
19. 2 Cor 5:17-21: To whom are we reconciled? Who are the ambassadors of reconciliation?
20. Eph 2:19-22: Can you list all the terms used to describe the church?
21. 1 Tim 3:14-15: What is the pillar and foundation of the truth?
22. Eph 5:25-27: How did Christ save the church?
23. 1 Cor 12:13: Into what are we baptized?
24. 1 Peter 2:4-10: In what way are we the temple of God?

6. The Revelation of God's Mystery—Ephesians 3

Previously Paul has shown that God's eternal purpose was in Christ (Eph 1:1-10) and in the church (Eph 1:11-23), stating in plain terms in Eph 1:11b-12 that all this was according to the eternal plan of God.

In Eph 2:1:10, Paul taught that both Gentiles and Jews are saved "by grace through faith." With faith as our part in God's eternal plan of salvation, we must ". . . do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10)." Through his eternal plan of salvation, God reconciles people unto himself in Christ and in the church, according to Eph 2:15-16:

His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Previous lessons have taught that the one body is the one church. In Eph 2:19-22, that set of descriptive terms for the church broadened:

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but **fellow citizens** with **God's people** and members of **God's household**, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the **whole building** is joined together and rises to become a **holy temple** in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a **dwelling** in which God lives by his Spirit. [Emphasis Added]

This lesson turns to how God made known to us his will, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world.

The Mystery of God Made Known to Paul

Eph 3:1-3

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles –

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

God gave the administration of his grace to Paul. Paul elaborates in Eph 4:11-13 that it also came to others to make sure that God's saving grace went to all:

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 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.

Paul was one of that inspired group—apostles and prophets—whom Paul had just named in Eph 2:19-20 as the foundation of the household of God, the church: "19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, . . ."

Evangelists, pastors, and teachers—continued beyond the apostolic age even until the present, administering God’s saving grace and using the inspired written word left to us in the New Testament by the apostles and prophets. Paul returns to this word *administration* in verse 9: “9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.” In verses 10-11, Paul placed the responsibility of spreading God’s saving Grace on the church: “10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, . . .”

Eph 3:4-6

4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 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.

What Paul had written makes people able to understand his insight into the mystery of Christ. *Mystery* means something that was once hidden, but now is made known. Paul explains in precise terms the process of revealing this mystery in Rom 16:25-27:

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him . . .

1 Cor 2:7-8 tells us how long the mystery was hidden:

7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

This study has already shown in Eph 1:9-10 that God made known the mystery of Christ, bringing all things together:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

When people, then and now, read what the apostles and prophets wrote, they can get the full and exact meaning and understanding of the mystery of God, just as the apostles and prophets themselves had it. In the letter to the sister church of the Colossians, Paul made certain that he meant *full riches* and *complete understanding*. In Col 2:2-3, he wrote:

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

There is neither need for nor any room for latter day revelations or ecclesiastical utterances. The revelation is complete.

Verse 6 tells exactly what the mystery is, leaving no room for speculation: “6 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.”

Remember here that the body is the church, the institution to which all Christians are added.

This definition of mystery emerges in the *Revelation* where Christ revealed through John when the mystery of God would be accomplished. Rev 10:7 reads: "7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

In Rev 11:15, the seventh angel sounds his trumpet and what follows is exactly what Paul is teaching:

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,

and he will reign for ever and ever."

The thought finishes in Rev 11:16-19:

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry; and your wrath has come.

The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great – and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant.

In Eph 2:21-22, Paul taught that the household of God, the church, is his temple:

21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The Manifold Wisdom of God Made Known through the Church

Eph 3:7-9

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

By the gift of God's grace, Paul preached the "unsearchable riches of Christ." In Col 2:2-4, cited above, Paul had described these unsearchable riches of Christ as "all treasures of wisdom and knowledge." There, he said that we might have "complete understanding." Now he writes that he preached to "make plain to everyone the administration of God's mystery." Paul's teaching leaves no room for further modern interpretation or latter day revelations. What Paul and the apostles and prophets wrote was scripture, complete and perfect in every way. 2 Tim 3:16-17 teaches: "16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching,

rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

What was revealed in the New Testament is *plain*, made so by the inspired writers moved by the Holy Spirit of God, just as Peter testified in 2 Peter 1:20-21:

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Eph 3:10-13

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Just as God’s eternal purpose was that his son should be offered; that the church should be the fullness of him who fills all in all; that man should be saved by grace through faith and good works; that Jews and Gentiles were reconciled in one body, the church; so it is that God’s eternal purpose is that his manifold wisdom of God be made known through the church. As the age of apostles and prophets approached its end with the demise of inspired men, the word of God remained in the scriptures of the New Testament. The scriptures charge the church to make the truth known. Thus, it is that 1 Tim 3:15 calls the church the pillar and foundation of the truth: “15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

Grasping the Love of Christ

Eph 3:14-17a

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

To make known the manifold wisdom of God and to be the pillar and foundation of truth, the church—the family of God—must be and remain strong in the inner being of each one of us. This power comes by allowing Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith. The church has remained strong, fulfilling Paul’s prayer over the centuries. Therefore, the New Testament church that Christ purchased with his own blood continues thousands of years later, making known the manifold wisdom of God.

Eph 3:17b-19

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Paul’s prayer calls for Christians to be rooted and established [grounded ASV]. All the saints have power that comes from grasping the incomparable love of Christ—a love beyond human knowledge and a love that fills Christians “to the measure of all the fullness of God.” In this context, as the church presses on to make known the manifold wisdom of God, how can the church fail? Who can be against it? Paul similarly wrote in Rom 8:31; 37-39:

31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?
37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38
For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the
present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else
in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus
our Lord.

To Him Be the Glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus

Eph 3:20-21

20 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, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Our power is in Christ from God. That power of God, as was his love, is immeasurable. Therefore, the glory for what Christians are and do belongs to God; but this glory belongs to him in Christ and in the church. This principle is eternal to the end, literally, into the ages of the ages. Ephesians 1 ended stating that Christ was head over all things; and the church, the body, was the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 2 ended with all men, Jews and Gentiles, saved and reconciled to God by Christ in the one body, the church. Now at the end of Ephesians 3, that same Christ and that same church is where God receives the glory. There is no other way.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:1-10: What was the role of Christ in the eternal purpose of God?
2. Eph 1:11-23: What was the role of the church in the eternal purpose of God?
3. Eph 1:11b-12: Does God have a plan for us?
4. Eph 2:1:10: How are we saved?
5. Eph 2:10): What kind of works are we to do?
6. Eph 2:15-16: How did God reconcile man?
7. Eph 2:19-22: How many names for God's people are in this passage?
8. Eph 3:1-3: What was the administration of God's grace? How was God's mystery made known? After receiving it, what did Paul do with it?
9. Eph 4:11-13: What are the offices of God's administration? What do they do?
10. Eph 2:19-20: Which of these offices included inspired men?
11. Eph 3:4-5: After Paul wrote the revelation, what were they to do with it? What were they able to understand? In whom was the revelation revealed?
12. Rom 16:25-27: In what kind of writings was the revelation made known? By whose command was it made known? What are all nations to do with these writings?
13. 1 Cor 2:7-8: How long was the mystery hidden?
14. Col 2:2-4: How complete is the revelation?
15. Rev 10:7: When was God's mystery to be accomplished?
16. Rev 11:15: When the seventh trumpeted sounded, what had happened to the kingdom? What was Christ doing?
17. Rev 11:16-19: What did the twenty-four elders say had happened? What happened to the

temple of God?

18. Eph 2:21-22: What is the temple of God?
19. Eph 3:7-9: What did Paul preach? What did Paul make plain?
20. Col 2:2-4: What are all the treasures of Christ?
21. 2 Tim 3:16-17: How complete are the scriptures?
22. 2 Peter 1:20-21: How do we get the scriptures?
23. Eph 3:10-13: Through what is the manifold wisdom of God made known?
24. 1 Tim 3:14: How does Paul describe the church?
25. Eph 3:14-17a: Where does Christ dwell? From where does our strength come?
26. Eph 3:17b-19: What surpasses knowledge? Why?
27. Rom 8:31; 37-39: Who can be against us? What can separate us from the love of God?
28. Eph 3:20-21: In whom and in what is the glory given? To whom is the glory to be given?

7. The Unity of God’s Eternal Purpose—Ephesians 4:1-16

God’s eternal purpose was in Christ (Eph 1:1-10) and in the church (Eph 1:11-23), all of which was according to God’s eternal plan as stated in Eph 1:11b-12.

Eph 2:1-10 teaches that both Gentiles and Jews are saved “by grace through faith.” Man must “. . . do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10).” Therefore, God reconciles people unto himself in Christ and in the church, according to Eph 2:15-16.

Previous lessons have taught that the one body is the one church (Eph 1:22-23). In Eph 2:19-22, the descriptive terms for the church broadened:

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but **fellow citizens** with **God’s people** and members of **God’s household**, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the **whole building** is joined together and rises to become a **holy temple** in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a **dwelling** in which God lives by his Spirit. [Emphasis Added]

According to Eph 3:10-11, the church is to make known God’s revelation:

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph 3: 21 ends that chapter with God receiving all glory in Christ and the church: “21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” The church of Christ is, therefore, distinctive, unique, and separate from all denominations and sectarian groups. Simply put, it is the church about which Christ said, “I will build my church (Matt 16:18).

Ephesians 4 secures the unity of God’s eternal purpose revealed in his plan of salvation for all ages – a plan that is unchanging and certain for all people for all time.

The Unity of the Spirit through the Bond of Peace

Eph 4: 1-3

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

The Christian life is a calling from God. The Hebrew writer says that it is a heavenly calling in Heb 3:1: “1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.” Paul emphasizes that the calling is God’s calling in 2 Thess 1:11: “. . . we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, . . .” However we, ourselves, must eagerly make our calling sure: “10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. (2 Peter 1:10).”

The characteristics of this *calling* are just the opposite to the characteristics of our former manner of living (Eph 2:1ff): Christians are to be completely humble and gentle, patient, and loving. These characteristics lead to the *unity of the spirit* and *the bond of peace*. Jesus himself prayed for this unity and peace in the lives of believers in John 17:22b-23:

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Of course, the one church, the one body, must be peaceful and unified, and not divided by denominationalism and sectarianism. Paul sets the stage for the seven unities for all to follow.

Eph 4:4-6

4 There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

1. One Body

The first unity is the unity of the body. Christ said that he would build his church in Matt 16:18: “. . . on this rock I will build my church. . .” The one church that Christ built is the body of Christ in Eph 1:22-23: “22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” The one baptism and the one Spirit—two of the seven unities converge in the creation of the one body in 1 Cor 12:13: “3 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

2. One Spirit

The unity of the faith includes the aforementioned one Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. This is the same Spirit that God has given to each obedient believer to insure their salvation. Eph 1:13-14 teaches explicitly:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.

The Holy Spirit dwells in us through the word of God—the sword of the Spirit, which is the instrument through which God speaks and works, according to Eph 6:17-18: “17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Heb 4:12 teaches that the power of this sword is without limit:

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Indwelling through the word of God, the Spirit of God speaks to us, assuring us that we are children of God. Rom 8:13-14; 16-17 explains:

13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. . . . 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

3. One Hope

The text above relates the oneness of the one body, the church, and the one Spirit to the one hope by asserting, "Just as you were called to one hope when you were called." The power of Paul's argument is gaining momentum! One body, one Spirit, and now, one hope reveal unity as the eternal characteristic of God's eternal purpose. Paul again demonstrates the interconnectedness of the seven unites. Of the Spirit and hope, he said in Rom 8:23-24a:

23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved.

This hope of adoption and redemption saves us and anchors our soul. Heb 6:19 teaches, "19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

4. One Lord

There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, the true savior and son of God. John teaches that it has been that way from the beginning in John 1:1-5:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

This Christ came to live among men and die for men. John adds in John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This Lord, who is the *One and Only*, garnered this same indisputable recognition from the Hebrew writer in Heb 1:1-3:

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

In Paul's companion letter to Ephesians, Colossians, he summarized the nature of Christ as the one Lord in whom the fullness of God dwells. This summary in Col 1:15-20 forever precludes any other as Lord:

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Yet there were and are false christs that seek to deceive mankind. Jesus warned of this in Matt 24:4-6: "4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." He warned again in Matt 24:23-25:

23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time.

5. One Faith

Without one faith, there can be no "unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." The faith as used here is the revealed system of all that God has given in us to believe. Paul described this system of faith in Eph 3:2-4:

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ . . .

It is the one faith to which all men must become obedient in order to be saved. Paul recorded in Acts 6:7, how people became disciples by obeying the faith: "7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." In Acts 14:22, it was the faith to which they remained true: "22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith."

According to Jude 3, it was the faith once for all entrusted to the saints: "3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."

6. One Baptism

The one baptism must be the one in Acts 22:16 that washes away sin: "16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." This same baptism, baptizes us into the body, the church, in 1 Cor 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body." This one baptism allows us to reach the blood of Jesus in his death in Rom 6:3: "3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" When we are baptized with this one baptism, we put on Christ: "27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Gal 3:27-28)." Indeed, this one baptism saves us. Peter said in 1 Peter 3:21: "21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God."

7. One God and Father of All

The One and Only God is "over all and through all and in all." For us, Paul explained in 1 Cor 8:5-6, there is only one God:

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

The key to Christian unity is in the phrase, repeated here, "for whom we live." This

commitment to living for God through Jesus is bedrock of all the other six elements of unity. God was, is, and always will be central. In the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:7-9), God stated the eternal principal of His unifying force:

7 "You shall have no other gods before me.

8 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 9 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God . . .

The Unity in the Faith and in Knowledge

Eph 4:7-10

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says:

*"When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men."*

9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

God uses the gifts and talents of the church and its members to secure the unity of the faith.

Eph 4:11-13

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 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.

Specifically, the gifts came in the form of the men who received them. The first two such gifted groups were apostles and prophets, who were inspired to write scripture. Paul described how God's revelation came through the apostles and prophets in Eph 3:5: "5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets." The evangelists, pastors, and teachers, while not inspired as the apostles and prophets to write scriptures, were unique in their qualification to build and protect the church, using the scripture. Paul described the work of an evangelist in 2 Tim 4:2-3; 5:

2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. . . . 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Pastors, who were called elders and overseers, were more specifically charge to feed and protect the congregation in which they served. Two scriptures bring these terms together, painting a clear picture of what pastors are to do. In Acts 20:17, Luke accounts how Paul summoned the elders of Ephesus: "17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church." When Paul spoke to these elders in Acts 20:27-28, he called them overseers and shepherds:

27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

In 1 Peter 5:1-2, Peter also uses the three terms to describe the pastor's work:

5 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers.

The present day practice of calling preachers pastors is clearly erroneous and unscriptural.

This passage ends in verse 13 with a reference to its beginning: "13 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."

The Unity of the Truth in Love

Eph 4:14-16

14 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 men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 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.

With these offices apportioned in the church, the church grew beyond infancy, being able to expose crafty men and their false doctrine. In contrast, the church could speak the truth in love, grow up in all things in Christ, and support and build itself up in love, with every member working and having a part.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:1-10: What role did Christ play in God's eternal purpose?
2. Eph 1:11b-12: What role did the church play in God's eternal purpose?
3. Eph 2:1-10: What two groups did God save? By what and through what are they saved?
4. Eph 2:10: What works must man do?
5. Eph 2:15-16: In what were men reconciled to God?
6. Eph 1:22-23; Eph 2:19-22: What are different names for the church?
7. Eph 3:10-11: Through what was the manifold wisdom of God to be made known?
8. Eph 3: 21: In whom and in what is God to receive the glory?
9. Eph 4: 1-3: How are Christians to live? How are they to act? What are they to keep?
10. Heb 3:1: What kind of calling do we share?
11. 2 Thess 1:11: Of what are we to be worthy?
12. 2 Peter 1:10: Of what are we to make sure?
13. John 17:22b-23: For what did Jesus pray?
14. Eph 4:4-6: What are the seven unities?
15. Eph 1:22-23: What is the one body?
16. 1 Cor 12:13: How does one get into the one body?
17. Eph 1:13-14: What does the one Spirit do for us?
18. Eph 6:17-18: What is the sword of the Spirit?

19. Heb 4:12: How powerful is the word of God?
20. Rom 8:13-14; 16-17: What does the Spirit tell our spirit?
21. Rom 8:23-24a: In what are we saved?
22. Heb 6:19: What is the anchor for our soul?
23. John 1:1-5: From where did the one Lord come?
24. John 1:14: What form did the Word take?
25. Heb 1:1-3: Through whom does God speak?
26. Col 1:15-20: What is the nature of Christ?
27. Matt 24:4-6: Who will try to deceive us?
28. Matt 24:23-25: What are we not to believe?
29. Eph 3:2-4: From whom do we receive God's revelation?
30. Acts 6:7: How are disciples made?
31. Acts 14:22: To what must we be trust?
32. Jude 3: For what are we to contend?
33. Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 12:13; Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27-28; 1 Peter 3:21: What does the one baptism do?
34. 1 Cor 8:5-6: How many God's are there? What comes from Him? For whom do we live?
34. Deut 5:7-9: What does God teach about idols in any form?
35. Eph 4:7-10: What did Christ apportion?
36. Eph 4:11-13: What did Christ give in the church? Why?
37. Eph 3:5: What do apostles and prophets do?
38. 2 Tim 4:2-3; 5: What do evangelists do?
39. Acts 20:17; Acts 20:27-28; 1 Peter 5:1-2: What three terms are used for pastors?
40. Eph 4:14-16: Describe the full-grown church.

8. Children of Light in the Lord—Ephesians 4:17 through 5:20

Having established God's eternal purpose for mankind in Christ and in the church, Paul turns to the manner of life and type of people children of God ought to be. There are two thematic statements given for this section. Eph 5:1-2 describes Christians as dearly loved children who imitate their Father: "5 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Eph 5:8b-10 calls for us to live as children of light: "Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord."

Our very name *Christian* is a name given from God the Father according to Eph 3:14-15: "14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name." The Old and New Testament prophets told of the name God would give his people. Isa 62:2 foretold:

2 The nations will see your righteousness,
and all kings your glory;
you will be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.

Jesus himself describes this name as the name for the victorious in the church in Rev 2:17:

17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

It is interesting that even to this day only true New Testament Christians understand the name given to them from God in Christ. In fact, almost all take the name of their denominations—Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, etc.—or take the name of their latter day sectarian groups—Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witness, etc.

The name *Christian* describes those of us who are God's people in the household of God. Remember the concluding statement in Eph 2:19-22 where those made one in Christ *were fellow citizens, God's people, members of God's household, whole building, holy temple, and dwelling in which God lives.*

Because we are God's children, carrying the new name of Christ, we must not live as the Gentiles do. We must live to "do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10)."

No Longer Live as the Gentiles Do

Eph 4:17-5:20

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 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, with a continual lust for more.

Paul returns here to the description of the lost and alienated offered first in Eph 2:1-3

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

The difference is that in the present text, Paul focuses on how the inward man of the sinner completely dominates outward actions: *futility in their thinking, darkened in their understanding, the ignorance that is in them, hardening of their hearts, and lost all sensitivity.* The end of this inward state of mind is that they give *themselves over to sensuality* and indulge in *every kind of impurity with a continual lust for more.* The addict continually wants more; the homosexual seeks to perpetuate a forbidden life style; the sexually permissive adopt a license for situational ethics – on and on the list could go.

Put off Your Old Self

Eph 4:20-24

20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 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; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Riotous, profane, and permissive living is not the way of Christ. We come to Christ by hearing, and by learning the truth. Once again, Paul harkens to a principle already stated, this time in Eph 1:13:

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit . . .

What we learned was to put off the old self, corrupted by deceitful desires and to be made new with a new self, like God in righteousness and holiness. This is the transformational story of the new birth in order to become God's children. It leaves no room for iniquity and worldliness. Jesus spoke of the transformation of the new birth in John 3:5: "5 Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.'" Paul described the process in Rom 6:3-4:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

In 2 Cor 5:17, Paul made the new birth synonymous to being in Christ: "17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" In Gal 3:26-27, the children of God are in Christ and by baptism the also put on Christ: "26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Eph 4:25-28

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all

members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

As children of God, who are like God, there are acts uncharacteristic of God that we cannot do. Put off falsehood and speak truthfully – no white lies, no cheating, etc. When struck with flashes of anger, we are not to sin and we are not to remain angry. Do not give the devil a foothold, in this context, by allowing your anger to seethe and burn within. Do not steal but work.

Do not Grieve the Holy Spirit

Eph 4:29-32

29 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. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

The contrast begun in the previous verses with *do not steal* but *work*, continues: no unwholesome talk, but only what is helpful. Since we were sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13), do not grieve him. Christians are to get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and all malice; and in contrast be kind, compassionate, and forgiving. This is the way of God who forgave us in Christ.

Be Imitators of God

Eph 5:1-2

1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

If we are dearly loved children, should we not imitate God in living a life of love? Christ's love and sacrifice, a fragrant offering to God, stand as the supreme example of love for us to immolate.

Eph 5:3-7

3 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. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

How rigid is God's moral law for us? There is not to be even a **hint** of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or greed. These are **improper** for God's holy people. In addition, there should be no obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking. One cannot mistake this language: no immoral, impure, or greedy person can inherit the kingdom of God and of Christ; and worse the practitioners of all these evil behaviors are idolaters. Even if we follow these paths of wickedness because of the deception of others, we are without excuse. Since God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient, we should shun those who lead us down these paths of unrighteousness.

Live as Children of Light

Eph 5:8-13

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible . . .

Returning once again to the transformation from children of darkness to children of light, Paul places on us the responsibility to “find out what pleases the Lord.” There are no excuses and no scapegoats; we must apply the standard of light to all our actions. The fruit of the light is **good**, it is **righteous**, and it is **truthful**. Any other acts are fruitless deeds of darkness; and indeed, we are to expose them. We all must apply this three-fold test of the fruit of light in the 21st century:

Good

According to 2 Tim 3:16-17 the scriptures equip us for every good work:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Righteousness

According to Rom 1:32, God’s decrees are righteous:

32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Doing right separates us from the devil and makes us righteous. 1 John 3:7-8 teaches:

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

Truthful

When we accept the testimony of Christ above all others, we certify that God is truthful. John 3:31b-33 teaches:

The one who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. 33 The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.

Even though Paul said that it is shameful to even mention what the disobedient do—as well it may have been in his day—we know that we have 24/7 exposure to explicit sexual immorality, brawling, drunkenness, vile language, and so much more on TV.

Eph 5:14

14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:

*"Wake up, O sleeper,
rise from the dead,*

and Christ will shine on you."

However, the light of the Lord makes all things visible for what they are. Paul admonishes us to awake and let the light of the Lord shine on us:

Make the Most of Every Opportunity

Eph 5:15-18

15 Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

The Christian alternative to the evils of the present world is to be careful how we live. Evils lurk on every hand along with the devil who seeks a foothold in our hearts (Eph 4:27). We must be careful, for just when we think that we have attained, the devil's temptations pop up in our lives. Paul described the circumstances in 1 Cor 10:12-13:

12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

The Hebrew writer gave a similar warning in Heb 2:2: "2 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." Paul has stated his case for righteous living so clearly that only the foolish would not get it. Another contrast concludes Paul's admonition: Instead of going with the world to drunkenness and debauchery, which describes the way people act when they are "having a good time," we are to be filled with the Spirit.

Eph 5:19-20

19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians, filled with the spirit, seek to speak to one another in singing and praying—spiritual activities approved of God. Nothing contrasts the world of sin and woe to the world of the Spirit of God and life better than the comparison of drunkenness and debauchery to the singing of spiritual songs and prayers of thanksgiving to God the Father.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 5:1-2: Who are Christians to imitate?
2. Eph 5:8b-10: How are Christians to live?
3. Eph 1:4-5a: How did God choose us? When? For what are Christians predestined?
4. Eph 2:19-21: What are some names for God's people?
5. Eph 3:14-15: From where does the name Christian come?
6. Isa 62:2: Whose mouth bestowed the new name on Christians?
7. Rev 2:17: What does Jesus give to the churches that overcome?
8. Eph 4:17-19: How must we no longer live? How does Paul describe the Gentiles?
9. Eph 4:20-24: How did we come to know Jesus? What did Paul teach us to do with the old self? What did Paul teach us to do with the new self?
- 10: Eph 1:13: How were we included in Christ?

11. John 3:5-6: How are Christians transformed?
12. Rom 6:3-4: What is the process necessary to “live a new life”?
13. 2 Cor 5:17: What are you if you are in Christ?
14. Gal 3:26-27: How do you put on Christ?
15. Eph 4:25-28: What is compared in this passage?
16. Eph 4:29-32: What grieves the Holy Spirit?
17. Eph 5:1-2: Who are we to imitate?
18. Eph 5:3-7: What is not to be hinted at among God’s people? Who cannot inherit the kingdom?
19. Eph 5:8-13: What is the three-fold test for the fruit of the light?
20. 2 Tim 3:16-17: What thoroughly equips us for every good work?
21. Rom 1:32: Whose decrees are righteous?
22. 1 John 3:7-8: Who is righteous? Who is of the devil?
23. John 3:31-33: How is God’s truth certified?
24. Eph 5:14: What makes all things visible?
25. Eph 5:15-18: How do we make the most of every opportunity?
26. 1 Cor 10:12-13: What are the limits to temptation?
27. Heb 2:2: How do we keep from drifting away?”
28. Eph 5:19: How do we speak to one another? How often are we to thank God? For what?

9. Strength in the Lord and His Mighty Power—Ephesians 5:21 through 6:24

In the previous lesson, Paul established the need for Christians to live as children of light, finding out or proving “what pleases the Lord.” The test for this proof comes from knowing that the “fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.” Using this test, Christians are to be careful how they live (Eph 5:15-18), making “the most of every opportunity.”

Paul turns in the last section of Ephesians to describe how Christians may maintain their relationships in this present world and defeat the devil who works against them. The strength of the Lord and his mighty power displays itself against the Devil and his evil tricks.

Submit to One Another

Eph 5:21

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

This passage begins with the idea of submitting to one another, showing the importance of submission to maintaining Christian relationships. The motivation for submission is our reverence for Christ. Paul called for this submission, telling us to have same mind as Christ in Phil 2:3-5:

3 Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. 4 And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. 5 The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had.

The key to good relations with God, Jesus, and fellow-Christians is to consider them better than ourselves, always looking out for their best interest. This works with the Father and the Lord, and it certainly works in the church, our marriages, our families, and our workplaces.

Christ and the Church Compared to Husbands and Wives

Eph 5:22-24

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

In today's world of equal rights for all, many balk at the wording: “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands. . .” However, Paul has just commanded us to submit to one another (Eph 5:21). Just as the church must have an order that comes from authority. so must homes. In the church, Christ has it; in the home, husbands have it. Just as Christ uses his authority to save the church, his body, so a husband must use their authority to save their wife, their body. However, as Christians, we must submit to one another—an eternal principle governing all our lives.

Eph 5:25-27

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Literally, if demanded, and figuratively always, husbands should love their wives enough to give their lives for their wives. Wives come to husbands in all their beauty, purity, and faultlessness. The thought of abuse should never cross a husband's mind. The husband is to the wife as Christ is to the church.

Eph 5:28-30

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – 30 for we are members of his body.

That men are to love their wives just as they love their own bodies is the second analogy following the first: men are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Given these two principles, a Christian man would never abuse his wife anymore than he would abuse his own body.

Eph 5:31-33

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The profound mystery is how two—man and woman—can become one. Other passages offer insight into the mystery, which occurs with husbands and wives, uniting them as one flesh and also occurs with men and prostitutes. The Lord himself stated the principle eternal in Matt 19:4-6:

4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

The devastation of sexual immorality is never better explained than by Paul's teaching that these sexually immoral people also become one flesh in 1 Cor 6:15-17:

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Shall restless teenagers, homosexuals, promiscuous singles, or unfaithful married people unite their bodies with those other than a mate? "Never!" exclaims Paul. Paul concludes by stating the unique and devastating effects of sexual immorality in 1 Cor 6:18-19: "18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."

The uniting with the Lord is the spiritual uniting between the Lord and his body, the church.

Children and Parents

Eph 6:1-3

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise – 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long

life on the earth."

As in all things, the will of the Lord comes first. Therefore, Paul conditions the obedience of children with the phrase "in the Lord." A misguiding or misguided parent is no excuse for a child to go astray. By citing one of the Ten Commandments, Paul shows that the reward for being obedient children is an eternal principle. These obedient children remain safer from harm and limit the possibilities of catastrophe coming into their lives: drunken driving injuries, contraction of AIDS and venereal diseases, bodily harm from evil companions – all of these and more come to disobedient children.

Children should never regard discipline as harming them. In actuality, their parents are protecting them from disastrous results. The role of discipline in our lives, according to, Heb 12:7-11, shapes and molds us for our own good:

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Eph. 6:4

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Fathers, and mothers by extension, have responsibility not to provoke their children by nagging and unreasonable demands. Discipline laced with scriptural teaching should be the companion to every act of correction. The why and why not of discipline can always be understood when accompanied by God's word on the subject.

Slaves and Masters

Eph 6:5-8

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

Fortunately, many of us do not now live in a world of slavery, but many of our readers from around the world do. The responsibility of those subjected to someone else's will in the work place is the same whether the workers are bond or free, white collar or blue collar. Workers – bond or free – owe their masters or employers respect, fear, and sincerity. The key to the proper attitude of workers is that our work be in obedience, just like the obedience we would give the Lord. Paul also phrased this principle in Col 3:23-24: "23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward." We are to obey our masters and employers when they are not looking at us, for the Lord, our true master, sees us. The Lord rewards those who wholeheartedly serve; therefore, in this sense, our dedicated, everyday work for

others is service to the Lord, whether we are slave or free.

Eph 6:9

9 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.

On the other hand, masters and employers ought to treat their slaves or employees as they would treat the Lord—no threatening or favoritism. In heaven, masters and employers, slaves and employees are one before God, the Father. In all these workplace situations, the Golden Rule applies to all parties, even if the other party is an abusive non-Christian: “31 Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:31).”

Build up Your Strength in Union with the Lord

Eph 6:10-12

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 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.

Our strength is in the Lord and his mighty power so that the least in the kingdom of heaven is strong beyond description when they take their stand against the schemes (wiles) of the devil. Paul repeats, “Put on the full armor of God,” showing that Christians cannot enter the spiritual war against evil without full equipment. The struggle is a spiritual one against the spiritual forces of evil and wickedness in the heavenly places. These spiritual forces of evil in the world attack us within our bodies and souls. John describes the point of attack in 1 John 2:16-17: “16 For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. “

Eph 6:13-18

13 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. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 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 saints.

With the spiritual forces of evil on attack, only spiritual armor of God can defeat them. However, in this spiritual battle, Christians are armed and protected from the inside. Therefore, all the weapons are spiritual weapons: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God and prayer. With these weapons, the Christian spirit will struggle and win the fight against the evil one.

Final Prayers

Eph 6:19-20

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

In his chains and isolation and fear, Paul's personal prayer was that he be fearless in making known the mystery of the gospel – a courageous ending to a courageous letter.

Eph 6:21-24

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

23 Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Final details and prayers for the church conclude Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 5:15-18: How does one prove what is well-pleasing to the Lord?
2. Eph 5:21: Who is to submit to whom?
3. Phil 2:3-5: How should we consider others?
4. Eph 5:22-24: Who is the savior of the church?
5. Eph 5:25-27: By what was the church cleansed?
6. Eph 5:28-30: How are husbands to love their wives?
7. Eph 5:31-33: When do husbands and wives become one flesh?
8. Matt 19:4-6: How long has the law of marriage been in effect?
9. 1 Cor 6:15-17: How does one become one with a prostitute?
10. Cor 6:18-19: What is unique about sexual sins?
11. Eph 6:1-3: What insures a long life on the earth?
12. Heb 12:7-11: What is the end of discipline?
13. Eph. 6:4: How are fathers to bring up their children?
14. Eph 6:5-8: How should employees act toward their employers?
15. Eph 6:9: How should employers act toward their employees?
16. Eph 6:10-12: Where do Christians get their strength? Against whom do we struggle? Where are the spiritual forces of evil?
17. Eph 6:13-18: What is the full armor of God? What will be the outcome of the fight with the devil?
18. Eph 6:19-20: For what did Paul pray?

10. The Fullness of God Dwelling in Christ—Colossians 1

Turning from the letter to the Ephesians and to the letter to the Colossians, this study once again notes their commonalities: The cities have in common their geographic location in Asia Minor and the letters have in common the theme of God's eternal purpose in Christ and in the church. This study has noted that Colosse is not mentioned outside the letter to the Colossians, written to them by Paul. Just south of the more notable Laodicea, the proximity suggests that similar problems with the church at Laodicea might have existed. The Lord addressed the church at Laodicea in one of his seven letters in Revelation 3:14-22. Later, this study will note that Paul encouraged Colosse and Laodicea to exchange letters.

The greater commonality of these two letters is how they focus on Christ and the church as they fulfill God's eternal purpose. This importance is fundamental, since the letters focus on the one Lord and the one church. These letters reveal an unchanging Lord, an unchanging church, and an unchanging truth, forever excluding the multiplicity of churches and modern denominations with their multiple and universal ways of salvation.

Inspiration reveals the eternal nature and unity of this thesis in each book: For Ephesians, as noted, the thesis statement is in Eph 1:9-10:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

The thesis of Colossians, which is similar in wording and exact in meaning, reads in Col 1:19-20:

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

No other Christ reigns; no other church is his body; no other doctrine will instruct.

Salutation

Col 1:1-2

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Paul begins by asserting his authority as an apostle, appointed so by the will of God. Timothy is with Paul, who, at this time, was a prisoner in Rome. The recipients of the letter are holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse. Paul greets these brothers with the customary prayer for grace (unmerited favor) and peace (with God, with Christ, with their fellow-brothers, and with those of the world).

Prayers and Thanksgiving

Col 1:3-8

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints – 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Paul's prayer – mostly one of thanksgiving – for the Colossian saints who believe in Christ and love all the saints, speaks of a love and faith that springs from the hope in heaven awaiting the saints and assured of by the word of truth, the gospel. This guarantee echoes the passage in Eph 1:13-14:

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.

The phrases relate salvation and promise to the word of truth, the gospel, in this passage showing that it is only the gospel that is God's power to save:

. . . you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. 7 You learned it from Epaphras . . .

Epaphras was a local preacher who had worked closely with three churches within a 50-mile radius, according to Paul's comment in Col 4:12-13:

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Paul tells us in Philemon 23 that Epaphras was in prison with him in Rome: "23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings."

Col 1:9-14

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul's prayer is that they might have knowledge of God's will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, that live a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way, bearing fruit in

every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, and being strengthened in all power. The result of the powerful attributes is that they have great endurance and patience.

Verse 12 begins a prayer of thanksgiving that Christians ought to pray and, in so doing, offers a final answer to the permanent existence of the kingdom of Christ at the time of this writing by Paul and continuing for ever and ever.

Share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. Saints are in the kingdom at the time of this writing and for all time. Hebrews and The Revelation repeat the permanent status of God's saints in the kingdom. Heb 12:28-29 teaches that we receive the kingdom while alive and can be thankful for it: "28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire." Rev 1:5-6 asserts that Christ has made us to be a kingdom where we serve for ever and ever: "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever!" John, a prisoner on Patmos, wrote that he was a companion in the kingdom in Rev 1:9-10: "9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." These and other scriptures stand forever in opposition to premillennial doctrines.

Has rescued us from the dominions of darkness. Paul explained the dominions of darkness in Eph 6:12: "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." The devil rules the dominion from which God rescues his saints, according to Eph 2:1-2:

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. Once again, the kingdom as the place where saints reside in this present world exists now and for ever and ever.

In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. The Father, who rescued us from the devil and translated us into the kingdom, redeemed us in Christ and forgave our sins.

The Supremacy of Jesus, the Son of God

Col 1:15-18

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Three passages reveal the supremacy of Jesus. This one is significant because it notes that he is the head of the body, the church. The church is the one church which Jesus said that he would build in Matt 16:18. This passage leaves no room for many churches as in modern-day denominationalism. As to the supremacy of the Son of God, the passage speaks eloquently as do the other two: John 1:1-5, 14 teaches:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Heb 1:1-4 teaches:

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

The Gospel of Reconciliation

Col 1:19-23

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

The sum of all the previous verses is that the fullness of God dwells in Christ, and through Christ, all things in heaven and earth were reconciled. Paul affirmed this same principle in Eph 2:14-17:

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

In 2 Cor 5:17-21, Paul described the ministry of reconciliation:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

The Glorious Riches of God's Mystery

Col 1:24-29

24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to

Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness – 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Once again, Paul affirms that the body of Christ is the church. Returning to the mystery of God, Paul says plainly and clearly: "The glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you." This is the sum of it all. Paul also explain just as clearly how Christ comes to be in us in Gal 3:26-28: "26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed [did put on Christ ASV] yourselves with Christ. Rev 10:6-7 declares the mystery of God accomplished:

"There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

In Rev 11:15, the seventh angel sounded his trumpet:

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,
and he will reign for ever and ever."

And this is the kingdom, the church, the one body, into which God translated us, having redeemed us in Christ and forgiven us our sins.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:9-10: What did God make known to us?
2. Col 1:19-20: Where does all the fullness of God dwell?
3. Col 1:1-2: Who made Paul an apostle? To whom was the letter written?
4. Col 1:3-8: What springs from hope? Where do you learn of it?
5. Eph 1:13-14: What guarantees our inheritance?
6. Col 4:12-13: What kind of person was Epaphras?
7. Col 1:9-14: What are saints to bear? In what are they to grow? For what did God qualify us? Into what did He bring us? From what did He rescue us?
8. Heb 12:28-29: What is the nature of the kingdom?
9. Rev 1:5-6: What did Christ make us?
10. Rev 1:9-10: What was John a companion in?
11. Eph 6:12: Against what do we struggle?
12. Eph 2:1-2: What do worldly people follow?
13. Col 1:15-18: In what does Christ have supremacy?
14. John 1:1-5, 14: Where was Christ in the beginning? What did the word become?
15. Heb 1:1-4: Through whom does God speak?

16. Col 1:19-23: Where does God's fullness dwell? To whom had the gospel been proclaimed?
17. Eph 2:14-17: How was man reconciled to God?
18. 2 Cor 5:17-21: What is the ministry of reconciliation?
19. Col 1:24-29: Where are the glorious riches of God found?
20. Gal 3:26-28: How does one put on Christ?
21. Rev 10:6-7: What did the angel say when God accomplished his mystery?

11. Human Laws and Regulations Rejected—Colossians 2

An over-arching premise of Col 1 is that God had all his fullness dwell in Christ, His son. Col 1:19-20 teaches:

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

In Eph 1:22-23, the church is the fullness of Christ:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

In Col 1:25-26, Paul adds that he presented God's word in its fullness:

25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

In Col 2, Paul builds on these facts: God, who delivers out of the powers of this world and translates us into the kingdom of the son of His love, chose to sum up all his fullness in Christ with the church being Christ's fullness. The word of God, similarly, was the fullness of God's mystery. The God and Father, his son the Lord Jesus, and the word of the apostles are full and complete, with nothing lacking. All human laws and regulations are unnecessary, and they are untrue and harmful. With a 21st century religious world founded on denominational and sectarian false doctrine, it becomes important to throw off the shackles of religious error and hold to the fullness of the truth of God as presented by the apostles and prophets.

All the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge

Col 2:1-3

I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The teachings of the New Testament—the written word of the apostles and prophets—gives us the full riches of complete understanding. The truth is that man needs no other instruction. It is of this written word that Paul said in Eph 3:4-5:

4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The reason for this all-sufficiency of the New Testament is clear: in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. The New Testament is complete and thorough and true; just as Paul stated in 2 Tim 3:16-17:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for

every good work.

Col 2:4-5

4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Set against all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—James calls it “the perfect law” in James 1:25—are the deceptive but fine-sounding arguments of the false religions, sectarians, and denominations. The key for man in a modern world is the same as it was for the man in the New Testament world: be “firm in your faith in Christ.”

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

This firm faith in Christ requires us to be rooted and built up in him and strengthened in the faith that we were taught--not just any faith will do. Jude 3-4 expresses this same principle:

I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. 4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Hollow and Deceptive Philosophy

Col 2:8

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

The world is full of books and television shows where men seek to take advantage by their hollow and deceptive philosophies. Evangelical sounding themes and new-age religions abound, most of which are materialistic (basic principles of the world) and/or built on human traditions. These all lead away from Christ and his treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Even the smallest change to the teaching of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament is impermissible. Paul wrote in Gal 1:6-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Col 2:9-12

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Paul returns to the themes of chapter one: the fullness of all Deity (Godhead ASV) is in Christ; and we receive this fullness in Christ. Since Christ is every power and authority, he commands; and those of hollow and deceptive philosophies and tradition do not. In this power and authority, we were baptized (buried) and raised with Christ through our faith in

the power of God. Do you believe God raised Christ from the dead? That power will enable you to put off your sinful nature as you are raised from the waters of baptism.

The Written Code Taken Away

Col 2:13-15

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

The same power of God that made us alive with Christ and forgave us our sins canceled the written code with its regulations by nailing it to the cross. Therefore, we are free from the Old Testament law and its ordinances. Those who bind the Old Testament today are the same group as those who teach and bind human philosophies—they are false teachers. The Hebrew writer taught in Heb 8:6: “6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.” Heb 8:6-7 adds:

6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

False Humility and Worship

Col 2:16-19

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Out of human philosophies and false teaching spew false requirements. Those binding regulations look to it to justify those things not approved in the New Testament, such as holidays, special celebrations, etc. Modern holidays, such as Lent, Mardi Gras, Easter, and Christmas, are examples of binding days not bound by the New Testament. False humility appears today in religious garb and postures not commanded in the New Testament. Many modern religions worship angels and venerate them by constructing statues, which become angelic idols, forgetting God’s eternal law in Ex 20:4: “4 You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of **anything in heaven above** or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” Modern sectarianism relies on alleged visions and dreams of their founders and even their modern day leaders. All of these--and more—lead people away from Christ.

Human Commands and Teachings

Col 2:20-22

20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to

it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.

The result of all human machinations and speculations outside the New Testament is that they lead people to submit to false rules and commandments. Whatever their requirements, they are empty and vain and will perish, because they are based on human commands and teaching.

Sincere people will inquire with a simple question: Where is that found in the Testament of Jesus Christ, written by the inspired apostles and prophets? Those who are teaching should never be offended when asked to prove their contentions by the scriptures. Peter encouraged in 1 Peter 3:15: "15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." In addition, Peter also said in 1 Peter 4:11: "11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God."

Col 2:23

23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Human philosophy and vanity, Old Testament laws and ordinances, modern revelations and visions; denominational and sectarian doctrines, or new-age and world religions all teach regulations that appear wise, good for worship, and humble. In reality, they are of no value.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Col 1:19-20: Where does the fullness of God dwell?
2. Eph 1:22-23: What is the fullness of Christ? Who fills everything?
3. Col 1:24-29: Who commissioned Paul? What did he present?
4. Col 2:1-3: To what extent did Paul want them to understand? What is hidden in Christ?
5. Eph 3:4-5: What can we understand by reading Paul writings? To whom has the mystery of Christ been revealed?
6. 2 Tim 3:16-17: What is God-breathed? For what is it useful? How complete is it?
7. Col 2:4-5: Why was Paul telling them these things?
8. James 1:25: What is perfect?
9. Col 2:6-7: In whom are we to be rooted and built up? In what are we to be strengthened?
10. Jude 3-4: For what are we to contend? When and how often was the faith delivered? To whom was it entrusted?
11. Col 2:8: What kind of philosophy tries to take us captive? Upon what does it depend?
12. Gal 1:6-9: What happens to those who pervert the gospel?
13. Col 2:9-12: What lives in Christ? Where do we find our fullness? Over what is Christ head? How were we buried and raised in Christ?
14. Col 2:13-15: What happened to the written code of the law? What was nailed to the cross?
15. Heb 8:6: How do the old and new covenants compare?

16. Heb 8:6-8: Why was it necessary for Jesus to seek a better covenant?
17. Col 2:16-19: What are we not to be judged by? What is a shadow of things to come? Are we to worship angels?
18. Ex 20:4: May we make idols? May we make idols of heavenly forms?
19. Col 2:20-22: On what are human rules and regulations built?
20. 1 Peter 3:15: For what should we always be prepared?
21. 1 Peter 4:11: How should we speak?
22. Col 2:23: Of what value are human regulations?

12. Hearts Set on Things Above in Everything—Colossians 3:1-17

Colossians 2 finished with the statement that the Colossians had died with Christ; and when they died with Christ, they died to the rudiments and principles of the world. All of these things were of no value in restraining the sensual indulgences of the body. Thus, the chapter ends, echoing the teaching of Col 2:8:

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

The corollary to dying with Christ is that they were also raised with Christ. This becomes the idea from which chapter 3 begins. This contrast of dying to the world and being raised with Christ continues through to the end of the chapter. Paul's exhortations here are similar to those found in Ephesians 4 and 5.

Set Your Hearts on Things Above

Col 3:1-4

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Christians die with Christ when they are buried with him in baptism, and raised to walk in this new life. Paul explains the process in Rom 6:3-7:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Having been raised with Christ, having crucified the old man, and having departed from a life of sin, Christians are now encouraged to set their hearts on things above. Here, Christ is seated at the right hand of God; therefore, Christians must set their minds on the things above where Christ is, and not on earthly things. The real and symbolic power of this transformation is in baptism, where Christians put on Christ and wear him as one might wear a robe. Gal 3:26-27: “26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Once we are clothed in Christ and hide our lives in Christ, Christ becomes our life; and we will appear with him in glory when he comes again.

Put to Death Whatever Belongs to Your Earthly Nature

Col 3:5-11

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to

walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Those who have put on Christ must put to death whatever belongs to their earthly nature. He lists these sins of the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which he calls idolatry. The teachings of Christ forbid these practices among Christians. Paul's reason is that the wrath of God is coming, and these same practices are in those passages that describe his wrath at the last day. Two examples, which describe God's wrath at the last day, are Rev 21:6-8 and 2 Thess 1:6-10. Rev 21:6-8 depicts the last day and the fate of those who practice these worldly deeds:

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

2 Thess 1:6-10 describes how it is the very Lord that we serve who will render vengeance on those who obey not the gospel and know not God:

He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

Not only does Paul condemn those broad practices of evil among men: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, etc., but he condemns those personal habits that come from within ourselves, spewing forth evil from our hearts and minds: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language. Christians will not do these because Christ renewed them in the spirit, and in their minds is the image of God, the Creator, and Jesus Christ, the Lord. Whatever the origin of Christians: bond or free, Jew or Greek, male or female, they are all one in Christ Jesus. Paul's emphatic conclusion to this paragraph states firmly, "Christ is all, and is in all."

As God's Chosen People, Clothe Yourself

Col 3:12-14

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

The idea of clothing ourselves in Christ gains real meaning when we understand that there are characteristics of Christ that we must live out in our daily lives. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience are those characteristics named by Paul as the fruits of the spirit in Gal 5:22-25:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

These are the same characteristics that we see in Jesus as the manifestation of God in him. In John 14:9-10, John reported Jesus commented that when we see him, we have seen the Father:

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

Of course, what they saw, looking at Christ, were the characteristics of goodness inherent in God the Father. Similarly, when people look at Christians today, who are adorned with his spirit, they should see Christ.

In addition to the fruits of the spirit, Christians must be extremely careful how they treat one another. In this passage, the forgiveness of others and the bearing of burdens of others are central to living the Christian life. Paul uses the terms *bear with each other* and *forgive each other*. Gal 6:1-3 tells us that we should carry each other's burdens:

6 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

1 John 5:16-17 takes this principle one step further, where John tells us to pray for those who sin a sin not unto death:

16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

Of course, beyond these virtues, it is love that binds Christians together and love that leads us to unity. Paul had written to the Ephesians in Eph 4:2-3 saying: "2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Let the Peace of Christ Rule in Your Hearts

Col 3:15-17

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The bond of peace and Ephesians 4: 3 is the peace of Christ that rules in our hearts. Members of the church, the one body, have this peace as part of their heavenly calling. How thankful we should be. Parallel to "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" is the equally forceful saying, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." The practical application of these rich statements requires us to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. The clause *as you*

teach and admonish one another with all wisdom is parallel to the clause *as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God*. These two principles secure our Christian worship in truth and in act.

Other forms of worship that are generated from the ideas and teaching of man have already been prohibited in chapter 2. Additional acts not specified by the word of the Lord demonstrate that his word is not dwelling in us. Thus, Paul concludes by saying that whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the name of the Lord signifies that it is by the authority of the Lord that we do everything. There can be no other name in work or worship. Indeed, our very salvation depends on the name of the Lord. Peter affirmed this principle in Acts 4:12: "12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Col 2:8: For what should we watch out? On what do hollow and deceptive philosophies depend?
2. Col 3:1-4: Where are we to set our heart? Where is our life now hidden?
3. Rom 6:3-7: Into what were we baptized? What kind of life do we live? What happened to the old self?
4. Gal 3:26-28: How are we clothed in Christ? When we are clothed in Christ, where is our life?
5. Col 3:5-11: What are we to put to death? What things belong to our earthly nature? What things are we to get rid of? In what are we renewed? What people are excluded from the gospel of Christ?
6. Rev 21:6-8: What kind of people will be excluded from heaven? Where will their place be?
7. 2 Thess 1:6-10: Who will come with Jesus? What will happen to those who know about God and obey not the gospel?
8. Col 3:12-14: With what are Christians to clothe themselves? How are Christians to treat one another? What virtue is above other virtues? To what does this virtue lead?
9. Gal 5:22-25: What is the fruit of the Spirit? When we belong to Jesus, what do we crucify?
10. John 14:9-10: When we see Christ, who else do we see? When the world sees us, who else do they see?
11. Gal 6:1-3: When someone is caught in a sin, what are we to do? What fulfills the law of Christ?
12. 1 John 5:16-17: What are we to do when we see a brother sin a sin not unto sin?
13. Eph 4:2-3: How are we to bear with one another? What two things are Christians to make every effort to keep?
14. Col 3:15-17: What are Christians to allow to rule in their hearts? What should dwell in us richly? With what should we teach and admonish one another? What are we to sing? In whose name are we to do all things?
15. Acts 4:12: In whose name is salvation found?

Christian Relationships and Personal Living – Col 3:18-4:18

In the last lesson, Col 3:16-17) stated some of the most profound statements of the book, all of which relate to the theme that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. His word is supreme in all that we do:

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

If all people will allow the word of Christ to dwell in their hearts, and always speak and do in the name of the Lord, New Testament Christianity will be secure.

Personal Relationships Established in Christ

For Christians, their personal relationships are the most important areas of their lives where the word of Christ should dictate their actions and behaviors. Paul establishes proper relationships for Christians who are husbands and wives, parents and children, workers and employers (masters and slaves). When the word of Christ dictates what we say and do in our personally relationship, we will satisfy the requirements of the Bible, and live better lives. Paul begins with husbands and wives. Companion passages in Ephesians illuminate these passages in Colossians.

Wives and Husbands

Col 3:18

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

In Eph 5:22-24, Paul describes the relationship of husband the wives, and compares it to Christ and the church and how the church submits to Christ, for he is the head of the church and himself the savior of the body:

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Col. 3:19

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

In Eph 5:25-28, Paul describes the relationship of the husband to the wives in the same metaphor of Christ and the church. Husbands are to love their wives, just as Christ loved the church:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

Children and Parents

Col 3:20

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Parallel passages in Ephesians continue to eliminate Colossians. Eph 6:1-3 states the full relationship of children to their parents:

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Col 3:21

21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Fathers and children travel their lives together: children must honor their parents, but parents should not embitter their children. These two go together. In Ephesians, a word used for fathers is the word *exasperate*. This word contrasts with teaching and admonishing the children. Eph 6:4 teaches:

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Slaves and Masters

Col 3:22-25

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

The chief idea for slaves in that day was to work for their masters as they would if they were working for the Lord. Today, this applies to employees, since we live in an age beyond slavery. The key phrase expresses the idea that we should work as if working for the Lord and not for men. Christian employees may rest easy with the idea that if they be treated wrongly the Lord will repay that deed. Eph 6:5-8 teaches:

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Col 4:1

1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Christian employers must treat their employees in a way that is right fair, understanding that they also have a master in heaven. There are no stricter rules laid down in the New Testament than those rules that call for employers and masters to give fair treatment to those under them. James 5:3-5 dealt with the issue in strong words:

You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the

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As with the other admonitions on personal relationships, Eph 6:9 offers a parallel to this Colossians' statement:

9 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.

Final Words

In verse two, Paul offers his final admonition to the church and states their responsibility with several admonitions. He follows this with personal statements about those with whom he is working.

Admonitions

Col 4:2-6

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Paul's admonition for them to watch, pray, and be thankful echoes the command of the Lord when he found his disciples sleeping in the garden just before his betrayal. In Matt 26:41, he said: "41 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Paul's admonition, on how to act toward outsiders, repeats the teaching to the Galatians in Gal 6:10: "10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." His closing words, "so that you may know how to answer everyone," are similar to those written in 1 Peter 3:15-17:

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The Status of Paul and His Companions

Col 4:7-18

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) 11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. 15 Give my greetings

to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

17 Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Paul's words speak for themselves.

Study Questions From the Scriptures

1. Col 3:16-17: How should the word of god dwell in us? In what are we to do all things?
2. Col 3:18: How are the wives to act toward their husbands?
3. Eph 5:22-24: How should wives, submit to their husband? Who is the head of the church? Who is the Savior of the body? To whom does the church submit?
4. Col. 3:19: What does Paul forbid husbands to do to their wives?
5. Eph 5:25-28: Who are husbands to love? In what manner are they to love them? How does Christ cleanse the church? After this, cleansing, how did the church become?
6. Col 3:20: Who are children to obey?
7. Eph 6:1-3: When children obey their parents the Lord, what is the result?
8. Col 3:21: What does Paul forbid fathers to do?
9. Eph 6:4: How are fathers to bring up their children?
10. Col 3:22-25: How are slaves and employees to work for their masters and employers? Who will be rewarded? Who will be paid back?
11. Eph 6:5-8: How are slaves and employees to act toward their masters and employers? Whose will are we doing when we obey our employers?
12. Col 4:1: What are masters to provide for their slaves?
13. James 5:3-5: Who cries out against masters? Who hears these cries?
14. Eph 6:9: Who is the master of all?
15. Col 4:2-6: To what are Christians to devote themselves? How are we to act toward outsiders? How do we deal with opportunity?

13. Christian Relationships and Personal Living – Col 3:18-4:18

In the last lesson, Col 3:16-17) stated some of the most profound statements of the book, all of which relate to the theme that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. His word is supreme in all that we do:

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

If all people will allow the word of Christ to dwell in their hearts, and always speak and do in the name of the Lord, New Testament Christianity will be secure.

Personal Relationship Established in Christ

For Christians, their personal relationships are the most important areas of their lives were the word of Christ should dictate their actions and behaviors. Paul establishes proper relationships for Christians who are husbands and wives, parents and children, workers and employers (masters and slaves). When the word of Christ dictates what we say and do in our personally relationship, we will satisfy the requirements of the Bible, and live better lives. Paul begins with husbands and wives. Companion passages in Ephesians illuminate these passages in Colossians.

Wives and Husbands

Col 3:18

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

In Eph 5:22-24, Paul describes the relationship of husband the wives, and compares it to Christ in the church and how the church submits to Christ, for he is the head of the church and himself the savior of the body:

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Col. 3:19

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

In Eph 5:25-28, Paul describes the relationship of the husband to the wives in the same metaphor of Christ and the church. Husbands are to love their wives, just as Christ loved the church:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

Children and Parents

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