

LESSON THREE

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Scriptural Reference: Ephesians Chapter 1.

A. EPHESUS:

Ephesus was a prosperous city located in western Asia Minor in the province of Lydia and was the capital of Proconsular Asia. Ephesus was situated near the mouth of the Cayster River on the main trade route between Rome and the East. It was one of the greatest trading centers in the eastern Mediterranean; it was also a "free city" with its own Senate and Assembly.

One of the "Seven Wonders of the World" was found at Ephesus, the Temple of Diana that was the center of all heathen worship in that area. Inside the temple was a statue of the goddess who claimed to have fallen down from heaven.

The Ephesians practiced a great deal of magic. Ephesus was the city of astrology, sorcery, exorcism and every form of magic.

B. THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS:

Scriptural Reference:

"But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:" (Ephesians 6:21).

This epistle was written by the Apostle Paul during his first imprisonment at Rome, probably during the summer of 62 AD. The epistle was written not just to the church at Ephesus, but to the churches of that area and apparently he meant it to be read in all of those churches. Tychicus carried the epistle to Ephesus along with the Epistle to the Colossians.

In this epistle, the Apostle Paul emphasized the holiness of the Christian's calling in contrast to his former sinful condition. Also he taught the unity of the Jew and Gentile; there was only ONE CHURCH. He presented Jesus Christ as making peace between the Jew and Gentile by the blood of His cross. This was one of the greatest of the Pauline Epistles. We may understand the importance of it when we consider the place that the Ephesian church had at that time. One whole chapter in Acts is devoted to the founding of this church. Paul spent more time ministering here than any other place. There is also a record given of Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian Elders in Acts, chapter twenty. In chapter two of Revelation we find the first of the letters written to the churches of Asia was addressed to this church.

C. IN CHRIST JESUS:

In Chapter one the Apostle Paul repeats twelve times one of his favorite phrases, "In Christ Jesus." Sometimes he worded it simply "In Christ," "In Him," or "In Whom," but this phrase is found throughout this chapter. This is one of Paul's favorite expressions. Definitely salvation depends upon a person being "In Christ." *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22).* *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ...*

" (I Corinthians 12:13). Paul is writing to those who are "In Christ." Salvation is only to be found "In Christ."

D. CHOSEN IN HIM:

Chapter one is a very important chapter. The Bible student should read and study this very carefully. If he can understand what the Lord offers him, he will never be tempted to trade it for what the world has to offer.

In verse three, Paul expresses this by saying, " ... *who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*" This is a great contrast to the low position that we had while living in sin. Then Paul goes on to mention some of these spiritual blessings, which has been given to the child of God. He is chosen "In Christ," predestinated and adopted to be a child of God; here Paul is speaking of the Church. The Church has been predestinated and chosen before the foundation of the world. Individual members of the Church must make their own choice by free will. Each Christian must choose to accept Jesus Christ; however, God in His foreknowledge, knowing that choice, chose him from the very beginning.

We are chosen "In Christ" to be:

1. In Him;
2. Holy;
3. Without blame;
4. Before Him in love;
5. To be the praise of the glory of His grace;
6. To be accepted in the Beloved.

E. BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD:

In this chapter, Paul takes us from the eternities of the past, verse 4, to the eternity of the future, verse 10. The phrase, "foundation of the world" refers to the beginning of time and God's dealing with mankind in redemption. In verse 10, the word "dispensation" means "stewardship" and the phrase "fulness of times" means that God will do this exactly on time as He has it planned. At that time, He shall gather together all those in Christ who have already died together with those who are still upon the earth.

God's will was determined in the eternities of the past. Everything has happened according to the good pleasure of His will, verse 5. In verse 11, we read that He works all things after the council of His own will. In all of this, the emphasis is placed on God's will. If this has been so important in the eternities of the past and will be in the eternity of the future, how important it should be for the child of God to know His will, to surrender to it and to obey it.

F. PRAISE OF HIS GLORY:

Much emphasis is placed on the purpose of the Church. God has had a special place for His Church from the very beginning. The incarnation was for the purpose of the atonement and the atonement was for the purpose of redeeming His Church out of a sinful world. Several times we read concerning "the praise of His glory." Definitely the main purpose of the Church is to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ who loved the Church and gave Himself for her. Here it should be remembered that the Church can only bring praise of His glory when the individual members of the Church have chosen Him of their own free will. It is their choice that brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ in that day when we shall be caught up to be together with Him.

G. THE EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE:

Scriptural Reference:

"Which is the earnest of our inheritance ... " (Ephesians 1:14).

This is speaking of the Holy Spirit, which we receive when we are baptized with the Holy Ghost. "The earnest" is the down payment, which concludes a transaction. When one is baptized with the Holy Ghost, he receives the down payment, which finalizes the transaction of His redemption. We are sealed with His Holy Ghost, which signifies we belong to Him. Not only is it a symbol of ownership, but also it gives security. However, this seal may be broken if one deliberately turns back to live in sin.

H. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS:

In the epistle, Paul gives two prayers for the Ephesian church. The first one is found in chapter 1 verses 17 & 18. This is a prayer that their understanding may be enlightened to know not only what they have been provided "in Christ," but also to know that they, in turn, constitute Christ's inheritance; for the Church is His inheritance. In order that they may understand this profound truth, Paul prays that they may receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

I. THE BODY OF CHRIST:

The last two verses in chapter one states clearly that the church is Christ's body upon the earth. There is only one body and in order to be saved, one must be a member of that body. In verse 9 the mystery of His will is revealed—the fact that both Jew and Gentile are ONE in the church. Jesus Christ has broken down the wall of division and by His Spirit baptized both Jew and Gentile into His body.

LESSON THREE

SELF HELP TEST

- A. Write a brief account of the founding of the Ephesian church.

- B. By referring to its prominence given in the Word of God, show the importance of the Ephesian church.

- C. Explain fully what is meant by the phrase "in Christ."

- D. What is meant by the phrase "before the foundation of the world?"

- E. What is meant by the phrase "earnest of our inheritance?"

- F. Write a paragraph explaining the purpose of the church as given in the first chapter of Ephesians.

- G. Write out in full the Scripture that proves the Church to be the body of Christ.