

EPHESIANS: PRECISION THINKING FOR ACCURATE THEOLOGY

SESSION 1 | EPHESIANS 1:1-5

THE GREETING | EPHESIANS 1:1-2

- Verse 1 - A close reading of this verse alerts the reader to the fact that Paul is writing to two groups of people: **the saints** and **the faithful**. He is not writing to *the saints who are faithful* (as in NASB). We will build the case that **the saints** are Jewish believers in the church and **the faithful in Christ Jesus** are Gentile believers.
- Verse 2 - **Grace** and **peace** is Paul's standard prayer for the recipients of his letter. These two blessings are so aligned with this dispensation, and are the opposite of the plan of God outlined in the prophets in which God promised *judgment and war* when the Jewish nation rejected Him.
- Verse 3 –
 - In verses 3-12, Paul uses the first person plural (us/we).
 - Whereas almost every Bible commentary assumes that this pronoun includes the reader, such an interpretation is neither insisted upon in the text nor logically concluded (or even allowed) from Paul's use of the second person plural (ye/you) beginning in verse 12.
 - In verses 13-14 Paul uses both second person and first person, and any logical conclusion must be that Paul speaks of two different groups of people.
 - Note that the interpretation of the book of Ephesians must include this change of person.
 - The task of the Bible student, then, is to determine the identity of the **us** to whom **all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ** have been given. The student can do this by personal evaluation (which is worthless) or asking their pastor (which is equally worthless, if the Pastor answers based on his personal evaluation), or by searching the Scriptures to find the recipients of **all spiritual blessings**.
 - Who are the recipients of such blessings? Consider the following passages: Genesis 12:2-3, 22:18, Isaiah 61:6-9, 62:1-2 (note the contrast to the Gentiles in both Isaiah passages), Romans 3:1-2.
 - The only rational conclusion is that the *Jews of faith* are "us" in verses 3-12. This will mean that non-Jews of faith (i.e.: Gentile believers) are the "ye" beginning in v. 13.
 - If one concludes that *us* is "the church," then who will "ye" be? Was Paul so sloppy in grammar and speech as to simply use the wrong pronoun...or do the pronouns convey precise spiritual information.
 - Most Bible translations make a subtle insertion into Ephesians 1 that leads the student on a "wild goose chase" by pre-setting their focus.
 - NASB inserts a heading: *The Blessings of Redemption*
 - ESV/NRSV/GNB/NIV inserts a heading: *Spiritual Blessings in Christ*
 - The ESV contains an introduction to the book of Ephesians, and the first sentence says, "The apostle Paul wrote Ephesians to the churches around Ephesus (Acts 19) to display the scope of God's eternal plan for all humanity—"

for Jews and Gentiles alike. This is the mystery of God, hidden for ages but now made known in Jesus Christ.”¹

- NOTE: The "scope of God's eternal plan for humanity" is *not* the mystery of God, hidden for ages. From at least Genesis 12:3 it is abundantly obvious that the scope of "God's eternal plan for humanity" included "Jews and Gentiles alike." Such a statement is either spiritually ignorant or so enamored with a personal theological agenda as to call it Biblical malpractice.
- Verse 4 –
 - Our interpretation of v. 3 should be confirmed in the pronouns of v. 4 (and beyond). If, therefore, the Jewish believers are "us," then do the descriptions of vv. 4-12 align with this interpretation?
 - Who, then, has been **chosen...in him before the foundation of the world** to be **holy and without blame before him**? For the answer, consider Deuteronomy 7:6-7, Psalm 33:12, 135:4, Isaiah 41:8, 65:8-10, Matthew 24:22, 24, 31, 1 Peter 1:1-2, etc.
 - Were the Jews chosen to **be holy and without blame**? See Leviticus 19:2, Isaiah 26:2, 1 Peter 1:16, 1 Peter 2:9, etc.
- Verse 5 –
 - Are the Jews those who are **predestinated...unto the adoption of children**? The standard Reformed Theology conclusion is that God has predestined certain people to be adopted as His children and left the rest to be damned. Is such a conclusion merited here?
 - Consider Romans 9:4 -
 - There is not a single passage in the Bible that gives **the adoption** to all believers. Rather, this is a matter that is related to Israel, as this passage unequivocally declares.
 - The believers of Israel currently have the **Spirit of adoption** (Rom. 8:15) but are **waiting for the adoption** itself (Rom. 8:23).
 - Galatians 4:5 also restricts the **adoption of sons** to those who **were under the law**.
 - While most Christian theologians consider adoption to be part of general Christian doctrine in the church-age, such a theology doesn't align with this verse, nor the others about adoption. By surmising that adoption is *being brought into a new family*, they then proceed with eisegesis to prove their assumption. However, adoption as sons is not *being brought into a new family* but is about a son who was *born into the family* receiving the legal right to manage the affairs of the household. In the church age, we are not born into the family and later receive full rights. Rather, we are gifted eternal life by grace through faith, and receive the full rights of the relationship immediately.

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph.