



SEQUIM COMMUNITY CHURCH

EPHESIANS

INTRODUCTION #1: SEE THE BIG PICTURE

Welcome to our study of the book of Ephesians. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is an instruction manual for living life as God intended - seated with Christ. Over the next few months, you will discover who you are in Christ and the blessings you have inherited through His death and resurrection.

We have a new identity as joint heirs with Christ. If we lose sight of this identity we will not experience the fullness of our blessings and inheritance as God's adopted children. It is time to take our seat in Christ Jesus!

"God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus."

– Ephesians 2:4-6

THE BACKGROUND OF EPHESIANS

Paul's reason for writing this letter was to strengthen people's faith by explaining the nature and purpose of the church, the body of Christ. The letter easily divides into two parts. Part one (chapters 1-3) focuses on doctrine, specifically, the new life and new society God has created through Jesus. Part two (Ch 4-6) focuses on ethics, specifically, the new standards and new relationships God intends for us.

DATE AND SETTING:

The letter was written from prison (Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1), and is therefore dated about A.D. 60 when Paul was imprisoned in Rome (Acts 28:16). Many scholars believe that Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon were all written about the same time. Over half the verses in Ephesians are also found in Colossians, so it appears that Paul first developed his major themes while dealing with a local problem in Colossae, and then expanded them to a more universal setting for this letter. Paul's letter was written to the church at Ephesus, but it was also meant for circulation among other churches in the area. Historically, Ephesians became a circular letter distributed to many of the early churches, and it doesn't deal with any specific problem in any one church.

The city of Ephesus was a focal point for the churches in the region, a veritable training center for church planting with the Apostle Paul as the instructor. When he lived there in the early A.D. 50's, Acts 19:9-10 says that Paul took the disciples and "had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." The seven churches in Revelation (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea) are all within 100 miles of each other, and it is likely that Tychicus "a dear brother and servant of the Lord," who is referred to in the conclusion, took this letter and made the rounds to each of them. (See Ephesians 6:21-23)

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Read aloud Ephesians 1:1-14. As you read, circle each instance of the phrases "in Him" and "in Christ":

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

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

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

³Praise 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. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹In 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, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory."

• How does Paul identify himself to the church at Ephesus (v 1)? _____

• From whose authority did Paul speak? (v. 1-2) _____

2. List all of the "spiritual blessings" you see in this passage given by God to believers. _____

• What role does each Person of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) play in providing us these blessings? _____

3. Paul began his letter with a blessing toward God. Why did Paul say God was worthy of blessing and praise (v.3)? _____

- What additional reasons did Paul give for honoring God with a blessing (v4)? _____

4. In verses 4 and 5, Paul states that we are chosen before the creation of the world, and predestined for adoption. The idea of being chosen or predestined brings with it a long history of disagreement among faithful Christians. Have your views on predestination been changed or reinforced after hearing Donna's teaching about it? _____

- What does it mean to be "chosen" or "predestined" by God? _____

- When did God predestine us? _____

- Why did God predestine us? In other words, what is the purpose of His choice? _____

5. What insights do the following verses give us about predestination?

- Acts 16:31 _____

- John 1:12 _____

- Ephesians 1:13 _____

- Romans 8:28-29

6. Why does any of this really matter? Is predestination just a big theological debate, or does it have a practical application to our lives? _____