



SEQUIM COMMUNITY CHURCH

EPHESIANS

SESSION 1B: THE HEAVENLY BLESSING FOR US

Ephesians 1:1-14

"Exploring the new life and new society God has created through Jesus"

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Ephesians has many verses which talk about mystery - which is a truth revealed. As we proceed in this study we'll also take a look at references to mysteries in Ephesians 3:3-9, 5:32, and 6:19.

"And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 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." -- Ephesians 1:9-10

1. From verse 1:10 can you tell what the "mystery of his will" is? _____
When will it be put into effect? _____

2. Read the following three passages, which give vivid pictures of what it will look like to have everything summed up and "brought together" in Jesus.

"Jesus 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. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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."-- Colossians 1:18-20

"Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." -- Philippians 2:8-11

"And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.' Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!' The four living creatures said, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshiped." -- Revelation 5:9-14

• What is the significance of Jesus' death on the cross in these passages? _____

• Why does his sacrifice lead to his exaltation? _____

"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, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having also believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." -- Ephesians 1:11-13

3. Paul said in verses 5 and 11 that God "predestined" Christians to become his heirs. In verse 13 he said his readers "heard" and "believed" the gospel. Belief implies a decision freely chosen. How can both of Paul's statements be true? _____

The Holy Spirit's Blessing for Us

"Having also believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory." -- Ephesians 1:13-14

The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee to us that he will do what he promised. He is like a down payment, a deposit, a validating signature on a contract. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is our assurance of eternal life.

4. How have recognized you the Holy Spirit and his blessings in your own life? _____

Praying for one another

In this lesson we have explored the many ways that God has blessed us in the heavenly realms. Some of these blessings are related to the future - such as eternal life, and receiving an inheritance. Other blessings may be able to appreciate right now: being freed from bondage, sensing forgiveness, having an awareness of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We've been chosen to be holy and blameless in his sight and we know that God is for us in this endeavor. He's put all the grace and power of heaven at our disposal. It's there for the asking. Spend some time praying together and appreciating what God has done for you. Pray also for any needs you are facing in the group.

Digging Deeper

For those who want to do more personal reflection on this topic.

A. What does it mean to be chosen and predestined? _____

The following is adapted from an article by Dr. Scott E Koenigsaecker

Am I a Christian because God in is sovereignty (His ultimate control of and power over all things) destined me to be saved because he chose me, thus overriding my personal free choice?

Our coming to faith is not a "conflict" of our will and God's will, but a "compliment" of wills. We are saved only because God wills it and if God did not will it we could never be saved. We cannot reach God, but he reached down and touched humanity in Jesus Christ. Does this mean that we "must" respond to God's invitation or that we have no choice in responding? The answer is no.

God does not override our own individual will. Jesus asked many people to make the choice to follow him (see Matthew 4:18, 9:9, 19:21 for just a few examples). In Acts, Peter gave a long and detailed explanation of the gospel in order to touch people's hearts: With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."(Acts 2:40) Why would he seek to persuade people if they had no choice and it was entirely up to God?

2 Peter 3:9 says that God "is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance". He seeks after the one who is lost and rejoices when that person is found (see Matthew 18:10-14).

God's predestined plan is to make salvation in Christ available to all of humanity, and that is his choice. We only have a choice because God created that option, but it is finally up to us to accept or reject it.