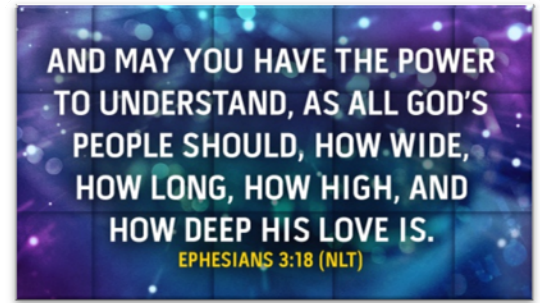


49 – Ephesians: Mystery of the Church Revealed

- **Ephesus was a large city and bustling center in the Roman Empire.** It was the metropolis of Asia Minor, known for its grand temple to Diana (*one of the 7 wonders of the world*), and its occultic arts. It was full of “educated” men, philosophers and worldly knowledge and learning. It was once a very rich, flourishing city. Paul spent a lot of time here, and remarkable things happened here (Acts 19). He wrote an emotional farewell to them in Acts 20. Some say that the church at Ephesus was one of the most spiritual, despite its worldly environment and surroundings.
- **Paul was a prisoner** when he wrote this letter, the first of his “prison letters.” Best guess for timing of the letter is probably about 58-60 AD.
- This book has been disputed as having been written by Paul. But there is strong evidence it is Paul’s and it was extensively accepted in the early church as written by Paul. *These arguments are silly and serve no point.* The book of Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul.
- This letter could be considered as a “**circular**” letter, as were many of Paul’s. It is written to the church in Ephesus, but most likely the believers circulated all Paul’s letters.
- **Paul does not write to correct any particular problems**, as he did in other letters. We do know that they had successfully kept out false teachers, but had “lost their first love” (the passion for Christ) from the letter to them in Revelation 2. Love seems to be central focus for Paul in this letter, as forms of the word “love” (*agapao, agape*, that “sold out” impassioned love) is used 19 times. This letter begins and ends with love. Paul is stirring up their passion, which apparently had ebbed, according to Revelation 2.
- **Ephesians addresses the doctrines of grace**, divine predestination, eternal election, redemption, peace and pardon by his blood, and salvation by His grace in opposition to works. Paul also deals with the ministry of the Gospel, and its related gifts, and the duties of believers. He taught that Jews and Gentiles are one in Jesus, to be demonstrated by their love for one another, a love that comes only from God. Some have called this Paul’s finest work, and the “*alps of the New Testament*.” There are very profound truths here.
- **The great mystery of the Church** is the subject of chapter 3, showing how God had prepared for the Church even in the Old Testament, though it was not revealed there initially. The invisible “Church” is Christ’s body, and He is the Head. It is more wonderful than any temple made with hands, constructed of living stones, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. **It is the body of Christ in the world to walk as He would walk and do as He would do.** Someday the church will leave the world and be presented to Christ as a bride.
- **COMMENTARY: Paul wrote to the Ephesians that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Do we return that love? Do we respond to Him? Can we say, “I love Him because He first loved me”? This letter to the Ephesians ought to bring us very close to Christ.** (McGee)



Highlights

(We have found J. Vernon McGee’s outline to be the most logical and helpful in understanding this book, so we are providing part of his explanation here as a help, and have modified/adapted his outline on next page.)

The Epistle to the Ephesians is very logical. Of the 6 chapters, the first 3 are about the heavenly calling of the church and are doctrinal. The last 3 are about the earthly conduct of the church [and] is very practical. ...The church has a Head. The Head of the church is Christ, and He is in heaven. We are identified with Him. But the feet of the church are down here on earth. Paul won’t leave us sitting up there in the heavenlies; he says, “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (4:1). In other words, Christian, it’s nice to sit up there in the heavenlies and boast of your position in Christ, but, for goodness’ sake, get down out of your high chair and start walking. In the doctrinal section, chapter 1 the church is a body. In chapter 2 the church is a temple. In chapter 3 the church is a mystery. ...we find in chapter 4 that the church is a new man. The church is to exhibit something new in the world: walking through the world as a new man. In chapter 5 the church will be a bride. ... In chapter 6 the church is a soldier... there is an enemy to be fought. There is a battle going on in this world. The bugle has sounded. We need to stand for God today. (McGee)

Heavenly Calling of the Church (Doctrinal) Ch 1-3	Ch 1 Church a Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction, 1:1-2; God the <u>Father</u> planned the Church, 1:3-6 ("He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world") God the <u>Son</u> paid the price for the Church, 1:7-12 ("Redemption through His blood") God the <u>Holy Spirit</u> seals the Church, 1:13-14 ("you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise") Prayer for knowledge and power, 1:15-23
	Ch 2 Church a Temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the Temple? 2:1-10 (<i>The "dead in trespasses" are made into a living temple</i>) How is it made? 2:11-18 (<i>"in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ"</i>) What does it <u>mean</u>? (2:19-22 (<i>"that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross"</i>))
	Ch 3 Church a Mystery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Explanation</u> of Mystery, 3:1-4 (<i>Not revealed in the Old Testament</i>) <u>Definition</u> of the Mystery, 3:5-13 (<i>Jews/Gentiles partakers of same Body—the Church</i>) Prayer to appreciate the "mystery" and know the love of God 3:14-21
Earthly Church Conduct (Practical) Chapter 4-6	Ch 4 Church a New Man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What the <u>New Man is</u>, 4:1-6 (<i>"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit"</i>) What the <u>New Man DOES</u> (4:7-16) uses Gifts (<i>"for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"</i>) What the <u>New Man is not</u>, 4:14 (<i>"No longer children"—"grow up into Him"</i>) What the <u>New Man does NOT do</u>, 4:22-33 (<i>"no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk"—"be kind to one another"</i>)
	Ch 5 Church a Bride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk in <u>love</u> (5:1-7); Walk in <u>Light</u> (5:8-14); Walk in <u>Wisdom</u> (5:15-21) Walk in <u>Marriage Like Jesus and his Bride</u> (<i>in holiness</i>), 5:22-33 (<i>"That he might present her to himself a glorious church"</i>)
	Ch 6 Church a Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soldier's <u>Relationships</u>, 6:1-9 (<i>"in obedience...and sincerity of heart, as to Christ"</i>) Soldier's <u>Enemy</u>, 6:10-12 (<i>"The wiles of the devil"</i>) Soldier's <u>Protection</u>, 6:13-18 (<i>"The whole armor of God"</i>) Request for prayers for boldness, and greeting, 6:19-22; Benediction, 6:23-24

- **Important note about "predestined"** (1:5, 11) *"..having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will..."* (1:5) The word used (Gr. *proorizo*) means "to ordain ahead." It does NOT mean that God determined ahead of time that some would be saved and some would not. It means that it is His pre-ordained intention, and the way provided, that **ALL would be saved to be "sons by Jesus Christ to Himself."** This is not the false doctrine of "predestination" of a capricious and callous God that does not exist. God desires that NONE perish (2 Peter 3:9. John 3:16) He has provided the "way" to Himself (Jesus), and desires (has "predestined" all to come, but we choose.
- Paul introduces the **concept of being sealed**: *"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."* (1:13-14). This signifies God's ownership and security. We belong to Him, and we are safe in Him. This sealing is our guarantee of our inheritance, and our protection.
- The doctrine of **salvation ONLY through God's grace**, and not of man's works is emphasized in these well-known verses: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."* (2:8-9)
- Pauls reveals the **mystery of the Church** in chapter 3. This is an entirely new thing, not revealed in the Old Testament. And that is to make both the Jew and the Gentile into one new body of fellow heirs, called "The Church," the body of Christ (*soon to be Bride of Christ*).
- Most believers are familiar with the passages in chapter 6 that deal with the **armor of God**. We are soldiers involved in cosmic warfare, and the only protection we have is heavenly, from God. He also indicates we do not battle flesh and blood, but.. *"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."* (6:12b-13)

