

# CHRIST AND THE CHURCH IN THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

**Eph.1:1-23**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The book of Ephesians is Paul's essay on the church belonging to Jesus Christ, the glorious bride of Christ, the most precious institution on earth today.
  - a. It has more to say about the church than any other N.T. epistle.
  - b. It reveals that the church was in the eternal purpose of God.
  - c. Therefore, it was no after-thought. Christ and his church were at the very heart of God's eternal purpose and program of salvation.
2. The word "church" occurs nine times in the letter (1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23,24,25,27,29,32). The term "body" (referring to the church) occurs nine more times (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4,12,16(twice); 5:23,30).
3. Concerning the church, the book reveals that:
  - a. Christ loves her, 5:23.
  - b. It shall be presented to Christ, 5:27.
  - c. God's manifold wisdom is made known (demonstrated) by the church, 3:10.
  - d. God is glorified in the church by Christ, 3:21.
  - e. There is one body or church, 4:4.
  - f. Christ is the head of the church, 1:22; 5:23.
  - g. The church is the fullness of Christ, 1:22,23.
  - h. Christ is the savior of the body, the church, 5:23.
  - i. Christ gave himself for it, 5:25.
  - j. It is to be holy and without blemish, 5:27.
  - k. The church is the beloved bride of Christ, 5:31,32.
4. Chapter one of the book:
  - a. Has been called the "blessing chapter" of the Bible, and rightly so.
  - b. Introduces us to the "eternal purpose" of God, 1:9-11; cf. 3:9-11, which specifically mentions "the eternal purpose" in connection with the same thoughts discussed in 1:9-11.
  - c. Furnishes clear cut, simple answers to any questions one might have as to the wonderful blessings of Christianity, or about Christ and his church as the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.
5. To help us see and better appreciate this, we shall divide the chapter into two sections and emphasize what is taught or what is to be learned from each, taking note of how the second is related to the first.

## **II. DISCUSSION**

**A. OMITTING THE GREETING OR THE SALUTATION, WE BEGIN WITH THE FIRST SECTION CONTAINING THE MARVELOUS LIST OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS GOD HAS GIVEN US IN CHRIST, VV.3-14.**

1. God “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ,” v.3.
  - a. “Blessed us” ... “the saints...and ...the faithful in Christ Jesus” at Ephesus, 1:1.
    - (1) “Saints” – set apart, consecrated, holy ones.
    - (2) “Faithful” – those who have placed their faith or trust in Jesus Christ. Cf. 1:13.
  - b. “With all spiritual blessings in Christ.”
    - (1) “Spiritual,” not material blessings.
    - (2) “All” of these are “in Christ”; “All” – of every kind - are in Christ.
    - (3) To experience or obtain even one of these, one must be “in Christ.”
  - c. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us...”
    - (1) That is, “praised be God”
    - (2) Truly God deserves to be praised for so blessings us.
    - (3) Do we really praise him for this as we should?
  - d. The Ephesians are reminded that “**ALL**” spiritual blessings are “in Christ” and come “through Christ,” not through “the great goddess Diana of the Ephesians,” or the Law of Moses.
  - e. “In Christ”
    - (1) Used in an instrumental sense – through the instrumentality of Jesus Christ; he is the cause, 1:3-11.
    - (2) It denotes union, a vital spiritual union with him, having been by faith baptized into this spiritual relationship with him, Rom.6:3-6; Gal.1:26,27; Mt.28:18,19.
    - (3) To be in fellowship with him, 1Jno.1:3; Jno.15:1-8.
  - f. “In heavenly *places* in Christ”
    - (1) “*Places*” is in *italics*, not in the original text.
    - (2) Thus just “the heavenlies,” or where all Christian have their citizenship. Cf. Phil.3:20.

- (3) “Heavenlies” or heavenly habitation, and identifies the realm of spiritual reality.
      - (a) Spiritual are as real as material things.
      - (b) Furthermore, these blessings originate in and emanate from heaven.
  - g. He is here declared to be “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
    - (1) Jesus often said God is his Father and he is God’s Son.
  - h. The purposes of the spiritual blessings in Christ are revealed in this first section.
    - (1) “That we should be holy and without blemish (blame) before God,” 1:4. Cf. 5:27.
    - (2) “That we should be to the praise of the glory of his grace,” 1:6,12.
    - (3) “That...he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth,” 1:10.
- 2. These spiritual blessings as listed in vv.4-14: “According as he hath...”
  - a. “Chosen us in him,” 1:4a.
    - (1) Emphasize “Chosen IN HIM”
    - (2) Those “in Christ” are chosen, or elected, of God “to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”, and called by the gospel, 2Th.2:13,14; 1Pet.1:2,22-25.
    - (3) It’s an heavenly calling, Heb.3:1.
    - (4) Those “in Christ” are chosen “in him before the foundation of the world,” v.4b.
      - (a) Before the universe was created. Cf. 1Tim.1:9; 1Pet.1:18-20.
    - (5) Those “in Christ” are chosen that they “should be holy and without blemish (blame) before him in love,” the purpose of the choosing, or the design of God’s electing act. Cf. 5:27.
      - (a) Holy living is emphasized. Cf. Mt.5:8; Rom.12:1,2; 2Cor.6:17; 7:1; 1Th.5:22; Tit.2:11,12; 1Pet.1:15,16; 1Jno.1:7; Rev.2:10.
      - (b) “In love,” without which no sacrifice is acceptable, 1Cor.13:1-3; Gal.5:6; 1Cor.16:14.

- b. “Predestinated (“foreordained,” ASV) us unto the adoption of children (sons) by Jesus Christ to himself,” 1:5,6.
- (1) “Foreordained” – “to mark out before hand, to define a boundary” of something; “to predetermine” Cf. Builder planning a building.
  - (2) Before the world began God decided and determined the “boundaries” of his spiritual kingdom – who – what kind of people would be included and excluded *in group terms*.
    - (a) All those who would choose to come within the boundaries of his doctrine and remain there will be saved, Jno.8:31,32; 1Jno.2:24; 2Jno.9.
    - (b) The invitation is open to all, and all can come on the basis of faith and obedience, Mt.11:28-30; Jno.3:16; 6:44,45; 1Tim.2:3-6; Heb.2:9; 5:8,9; Rev.22:17.
    - (c) All those who chose Jesus as God’s Son shall be God’s chosen people.
    - (d) There is no Calvinistic doctrine taught here!
  - (3) This adoption of sons:
    - (a) Means to “place as a son” in God’s family.
    - (b) It is by the new birth, Jno.3:3-5; Ac.2:36-41; 2Cor.5:17.
    - (c) All of God’s children are in God’s house or his family, which is the church, 1Tim.3:14,15.
    - (d) Is by Jesus Christ and by him alone, his sacrificial death having provided the means of our adoption, and when we by faith obey his gospel the adoption is accomplished.
    - (e) Is done “according to the good pleasure of his (God’s) will,” as are all things God does, v.5. Cf. Eph.1:9; Phil.2:13; 2Th.1:11
      - (1) All is conformable to the good pleasure of his will, just as it was according to the purpose of his will.
    - (f) His choosing, foreordaining and adopting us as his sons is “to the praise of the glory of his grace,” v.6a.
      - (1) “Praise” means “commendation,” and “glory” means “honor, majesty, and

exaltation which belong to God – which he rightly deserves.

- (2) All praise and glory in this life belong to God, “to whom be glory for ever and ever,” Gal.1:5.
  - (3) Jesus possessed that glory before his Incarnation, and received it again when he ascended, Jno.17:5; Phil.2:9-11; Eph.1:19-23.
  - (4) Those accepted in Christ will receive glory with Christ when he returns, Col.3:4; Phil.3:20,21; 1Jno.3:2; Rom.8:16-18.
- c. Also, in him “we have redemption,” 1:7a.
- (1) Redemption, refers to deliverance or a releasing from bondage or setting one free by paying a ransom.
    - (a) All sinners are slaves to, held in bondage to, sin and need redemption, Jno.8:34. Cf. Rom.7:14.
    - (b) Since all have sinned, all need redemption, Rom. 3:23; Gal.3:22; 1Jno.5:19.
    - (c) No mere man can redeem himself; for redemption he is dependent on God, Jesus Christ and the gospel of Christ.
  - (2) We have redemption through his (Christ’s) blood, and only through him and his blood, Eph.1:7a (Ac.4:12); Mt.20:28; 26:28; Ac.20:28; Ro.3:23-26; 1Cor.6:20; Gal.3:13; 4:5; Col.1:13,14; 1Tim.2:5,6; Heb.9:15; 1Pet.1:18-20; 2Pet.2:1.
  - (3) That redemption is the forgiveness of our sins, 1:7a; Cf. Col.1:14.
    - (a) Needed because all have sinned, Rom.3:23.
    - (b) To sin is to transgress the perfect and just law of God, 1Jno.3:4.
    - (c) The just law of God condemns the sinner to death Some payment or ransom must be made or the sinner will perish eternally.
    - (d) The blood of Christ, and only his blood, washes away sin, Ac.22:16.
    - (e) When this takes place, the demands of the Law of God have been satisfied and it has no more

claim against the sinner. For he is then redeemed from the just claims of the Law of God against his soul.

- (f) God does not pay the redemption price to the Devil. All souls belong to God, even the souls of sinners, and God alone judges and sentences us then.
- (g) The wages of sin is death, Rom.6:23. But the Devil can't collect the wages for service to him, nor exact the penalty, nor receive the ransom paid.
- (h) While in a sense redemption and forgiveness are one action, they speak of two different things with respect to us.
  - (1) In redemption our helpless condition in sin due to our bondage therein is primarily in view, which demands a ransom being paid on our behalf.
  - (2) In forgiveness our own personal responsibility and guilt for that bondage is set before us in all its ugliness, with our need for it dependent upon another and upon his conditions.
- (4) This redemption and forgiveness is "according to the riches of his grace," so freely granted to us that it abounds, 1:7d.
  - (a) God's grace through Jesus Christ is the ground, the basis, of our redemption and forgiveness. Cf. 1Cor.1:30,31.
  - (b) Without God's grace, no sinner could be saved! But that grace is conditional, Eph.2:8,9; Tit.1:11,12; Ac.20:32; Rom.5:1,2; 2Th.1:6-10; 1Pet.4:17,18; Mk.16:15,16; Ac.2:36-41.
  - (c) God supplies all our spiritual needs "according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ," Phil.4:19.
  - (d) In the spiritual realm his "supply" of grace is more than sufficient to redeem and save all who will obey and serve. Cf. Rom.5:20,21.

- (e) V.8 enlarges upon v.7 and the “riches of his grace” by declaring “wherein he hath abounded toward us” (ASV): “which he made to abound toward us”) in all wisdom and prudence.” Cf. 1:17,18.
  - (f) The concept of God’s grace being given to us in great measure is explained also in Rom.5:15-21; 2Cor.9:8; Phil.4:13; Col.1:9-12; 2:2-10; 2Tim.2:7
- (5) For emphasis, concerning our redemption, take note of three important facts:
  - (a) Its procuring means – Jesus Christ by his blood.
  - (b) Its operation – forgiveness (as opposed to imputation) made free of the guilty of sin.
  - (c) Its condition – gospel obedience, an obedient faith.
- d. Another blessing we have “in Christ” from God: He hath “made known to us the mystery of his will,” 1:9,10.
  - (1) This is a key thought in the great theme of Ephesians.
  - (2) What was once a mystery or hidden or unrevealed has now been uncovered, revealed, made known in its completeness.
  - (3) It was first made known to the apostles of Christ and through them to us in the written word. See Eph.3:1-6,9-11; Cf. Gal.1:11,12; Jno.16:7-15; 1Cor.2:9-13; 1Jno.1:1-3.
  - (4) “Made known...according to his good pleasure,” v.9; Cf. v.5b. Conformable to his good pleasure; because it pleased him to do so.
  - (5) “Which he hath purposed (“set forth”) in himself (in him, or in Christ, ASV),” 1:9.
  - (6) “That,” as v.10 affirms, “in the dispensation of the fullness of times” (this dispensation of time, when God sent forth his Son, made of woman, made under the law, etc., Gal.4:4,5), “he might gather together in one all things in Christ...” and under the headship of Christ (1:22,23).
- e. Further still, “in whom also we were made a heritage” (ASV), 1:11,12.
  - (1) That is, “We (both Jews and Gentiles) are made the heritage of God himself in Christ.”
  - (2) A heritage is a possession that one owns by right of inheritance, which we have in and through Christ and are

promised in the world to come, Heb.1:2; Gal.4:7; Mk.10:30; Tit.1:2; Rom.8:24,25; 1Pet.1:3-5,9; 1Jno.2:25.

(3) “Being predestinated (foreordained) according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

(a) This was no after-thought, but was according to God’s plan and purpose “in Christ before the foundation of the world.” Cf. 1:4; 2Tim.1:9; 1Pet.1:18-20.

(b) His workings are not the result of chance or impulse or arbitrary action. Christ and his church were at the heart of this eternal purpose and program of God.

(4) To the end “that we (the Jewish believers) should be to the praise of his glory, we (the Jewish believers) who had (ASV) first trusted in Christ,” 1:12.

(a) The “we” of v.12 refers to Jewish Christians such as Paul and the apostles, et al. The “ye” of v.13 refers to Gentile believers, like most of the Ephesians. See Ac.2; then Ac.10; Ac.19.

(b) “That we should be to (a people devoted to) the praise of his glory.”

f. Finally, “in Christ,” obedient believers of “the gospel of your salvation” receive “the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possession (of God’s own possession, ASV),” 1:13,14.

(1) It’s through the gospel of Christ that we receive the earnest of our inheritance. (More on this later)

(2) “Unto the redemption of the purchased possession”

(a) The redemption of 1:7 refers to our redemption from past sins, our forgiveness.

(b) The redemption of 1:14, to the final redemption from the grave, when we are raised and glorified at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ. Cf. 1Cor.15.

(3) “Earnest,” meaning, “guarantee,” “pledge,” “an assurance, pledge or guarantee of something that would be forthcoming, not “a down payment” or “partial payment” for something.

(a) Gen.38:15-20 establishes its Bible meaning and usage.

(1) When Judah sought the services of one he thought to be a harlot, he promised her ‘a kid from the flock,’ as payment, v.17a.

- (2) Not having the payment with him, she asked for “a pledge, till thou send it,” or an assurance or guarantee that he would fulfill his promise to pay, v.17b.
  - (3) When he asked, “what pledge shall I give thee?” She said, “Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thy hand,” v.18.
  - (4) In v.20 his payment was sent in order to recover or receive the return of his pledge.
  - (5) Therefore, his pledge was never intended to be a down payment on or a partial payment for her services, but an assurance or guarantee to her that he would pay for her services as promised.
- (b) Vine’s definition, Vol. II, p.11, agrees: “In general usage it came to mean a pledge or earnest of any sort; in the N.T. it is used only of that which is assured by God to believers...”
  - (c) Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, Young’s Analytical Concordance, Wilson’s O.T. Word Studies, and The Theological Word Book of The O.T., Vol. 2, p.693, all say the original word for “pledge” or ‘earnest” means: “a pawn (given as security), a surety, a pledge, or to give as a pledge,” and all of them quote Gen.38:17,18 among the scripture examples given.
    - (1) Not one of these sources, in their strict definitions of the word “earnest,” give it the meaning of “a down payment” or “partial payment” of the Christian’s inheritance.
    - (2) It is only in their comments where they function as a Commentary that they ever do that!
- (4) “The gospel of your salvation...which **IS** the earnest (the pledge, assurance, guarantee) of our inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession.” (emp. mine, ejd)
    - (a) It is not the Holy Spirit which is the earnest of our inheritance.
  - (5) Think! Where or how do we have present-day divine assurance of or divine guarantee of redemption through Jesus Christ and a redemption of the purchased possession?
    - (a) If it is not in the word, or the gospel of our salvation, then where or how?
    - (b) See Mt.7:21-27; Rom.1:16,17; Heb.5:8,9; 2Pet.1:5-11,16-21; cf. Rom.8:16-18; 2Tim.3:14-4:8.

3. In this first section (1:3-14) we have found and studied the marvelous list of spiritual blessings, all of which, God has given us in Christ, wherein he revealed his eternal plan for the world's salvation.
  - a. While all material blessings also come from God and are vital to our physical existence and welfare, and are available to all men, Jas.1:17; Mt.5:45; Gen.8:22.
  - b. All spiritual blessings are found only in Christ, given only to those who are in Christ, and are of much greater value to us than the material, because they provide salvation for the soul, the greatest and most valuable possession we possess, Mt.16:24-26.
  - c. In view of that, the spiritual should be appreciated more highly and sought after more diligently than the material.
  - d. This eternal purpose of God deals with his people in Christ in this world and in the world to come, both here and hereafter.
4. Therefore, in the second section (1:15-23) we find Paul praying for the believer, the elect in Christ, that they may become so enlightened as to come to a fuller more precise knowledge of God and of the exceeding greatness of his power which he wrought in Christ in making all this possible.

**B. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE BELIEVER'S ENLIGHTENMENT AS TO THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S POWER WROUGHT IN CHRIST TIES TOGETHER THE TWO SECTIONS OF THIS GREAT CHAPTER ON THE CHURCH IN THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, 1:15-23.**

1. In his prayer to God on their behalf he first makes two requests in vv.15-18a.
  - a. That God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the (precise) knowledge of him (of himself), vv.15-17.
  - b. So that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, v.18a. cf. Col.1:9-11; 2:1-3.
2. In his dual request that they might be able to gain more precise knowledge of God, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, he wanted them to know the following three things about the God of the eternal purpose in Christ. (See Jno.17:3)
  - a. "That ye may know what is the hope his calling," v.18b.
    - (1) That living hope which we have in Christ.
    - (2) Cf. Rom.8:24,25; Tit.1:2.
    - (3) Prayer for a fuller knowledge and consequent appreciation of this hope.

- b. “And what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,” v.18c. Cf. 1Pet.1:3-5,9; 2Pet.1:5-11.
- c. “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, v.19 – which is elaborated on in vv.20-23, that they may know more about this awesome power.
  - (1) This power used to raise Christ from the dead, v.20a.
    - (a) Christ being raised, proves all will be raised.
  - (2) This power used to exalt Christ, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all power, and every name, in this world, and the world to come, vv.20b,21.
  - (3) This power used to subject all things to Christ, v.22a. Cf. Mt.28:18, delegated authority. See 1Cor.15:27.
  - (4) This power used to make Christ the head over all things to the church, vv.22b,23.
    - (a) The church which is his body, v.23a.
    - (b) The church which is his fullness, v.23b. Cf. Col.1:19; 2:9,10.
      - (1) Fullness signifying that which is filled
      - (2) The church is filled (not just allotted a sample) by Christ with blessings and salvation.
      - (3) It’s filled with the riches of God in Christ and everything that entails.

### III. CONCLUSION

1. We ought to pray, as did Paul, that we, all of us, may have the eyes of our heart enlightened about these marvelous things.
2. That we might come to have a more precise knowledge of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who through his great power made all these things possible through Jesus Christ.
3. Robert Shank, in his book, *Elect in the Son*, p.27, said: “Of all passages of Scripture touching the matter of election, Ephesians 1:3-14 is the foundation passage.” Then in the entirety of his book he denied that these verses teach anything akin to the Calvinistic doctrine of election. He affirmed that John Calvin’s doctrine of election is totally false!

Credit for the basic outline in this study goes to Wilbur Fields, *The Glorious Church*, p.1, p.42, *A Study of Ephesians*, Bible Study Textbook, College Press, Joplin, Mo.

