

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

A Study of Ephesians

Review #1

(Ephesians 1:3-14)

I. REVIEW

- A. Paul wrote this circular letter, primarily to Ephesus but also to the surrounding churches, between 60-63 A.D., while he was on house arrest in Rome.
- B. The letter begins with a salutation, identifying the writer, Paul; his recipients, the church at Ephesus (and those in the surrounding cities of Asia Minor); and giving a greeting. This salutation occupies the first two paragraphs (which we have as *verses 1-2*).
- C. Following the salutation, Paul begins the body of the letter with three chapters (as we have them) of heavy doctrine. Then, in Chapter 4, he moves into practical considerations.
- D. He opens the discussion of doctrine with an extremely long sentence (202 words in Greek, the second longest sentence of the New Testament, in fact; the longest being *Colossians 1:9-20*), detailing six great blessings God has unleashed on His children, and a call to praise Him for these blessings.
- E. In our study of this paragraph, we have looked at those blessings: namely, His election of believers from before the foundation of the world (*1:4*); His predestining us for adoption as sons (*1:5*); His redemption of us through Christ's blood (*1:7-8*); His revealing to us of His previously hidden will (*1:9*); His predestining of us to an inheritance (*1:11*); and His sealing of us by His Holy Spirit (*1:13*).
- F. Four times in this opening paragraph, Paul makes reference to the idea that God is to be praised. He opens the paragraph with a call to praise (*1:3*), and ends with a statement that God has done what He has done in order to lead us to praise (*1:14*). Twice in the middle, he makes that same statement (*1:6, 12*).
- G. Now, tonight, we want to consider this paragraph as an entirety, and discuss some practical ideas or insights *you* might have regarding the truths unveiled here.

II. QUESTIONS FOR GUIDED DISCUSSION

- A. One repeated emphasis of this paragraph (and the letter of Ephesians as a whole), is that all these blessings come to us *in Christ*, that is to say, in the realm of our union with Christ. As we have mentioned, Paul makes this statement about thirty times in this letter, and at least 13 times in this opening paragraph alone. Are you in Christ now? Are you certain of that? Tell us about your transformation and when you got saved. What does it mean to you now that, in Christ, you have every spiritual blessing? Can you give us any examples of how that truth has impacted you, or how the truth of these blessings have shaped your conduct?
- B. Another repeated emphasis of the paragraph is the concept of *pro* ("before"). Paul repeatedly tells us that these blessings were granted to us from before we existed, from before the creation of the universe, even. As we have noted, the point of this repeated emphasis is to reassure us that God's election of us, His decision to save us and give us all the attendant blessings associated with that salvation, was not a result of your performance. It does not depend on you behaving correctly, or working hard to ensure your qualification to receive it. Can you share with us what that truth means to you personally? Was there ever a time in your life when you thought you could earn God's favor or blessings? Has that thinking changed, is it changing now, or is that still a difficult reality to reckon with? Can you give us insight into what that process looks like for you?
- C. A third heavy emphasis in this paragraph is the reciprocal nature of our duty to praise God. He has blessed us, and we are therefore to bless (or praise) Him. Can you explain to us what praise means? Not just what the word means, but what it looks like for you to praise? Help us to see your view on how to praise God during the course of your day.

III. OPEN DISCUSSION

- A. Is there anything in this paragraph that sticks out to you especially? Maybe a truth that strikes you as particularly poignant, precious or practical? Or maybe something that resonates with, or even convicts, you in a special or specific way?
- B. What other thoughts have you had in relation to the text we've covered, or life in view of that text, as we've studied the paragraph together?
- C. Do you have any questions related to this paragraph that you would like answered or addressed?

IV. PRAYER