

NT 17 2.04

The BIBLE PROJECT

EPHESIANS—THE CHURCH, GOD'S NEW SOCIETY



The Jesus March, At Parliament, Budapest, Hungary, 2000

THE CHURCH Ephesians—God’s New Society

Ephesians is the biblical Summation of God’s purpose for Creation: *WHAT THE BIBLE IS ALL ABOUT*. – see John Stott, *God’s New Society*.

“EPHESIANS IS THE GOSPEL OF THE CHURCH. It sets forth God’s eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a **new society**, which stands out in bright relief against the somber background of the old world. For God’s new society is characterized by life in place of death, by unity and reconciliation in place of division and alienation, by the wholesome standards of righteousness in place of hatred and strife, and by unrelenting conflict with evil in place of a flabby compromise with it.” Stott, *GNS*, p.9-10

Unfortunately we in our **individualized modern faith** fail to give sufficient concern to the centrality of the full scope of redemption—which for the church is to become the **exhibit of God’s Project**—where God’s will is done and symphony replaces chaos, and Fellowship with God is sweet and sustained. The Work of Christ is not just to “save” individuals. Christ died to save the WORLD, to create a people for himself, not just singular saints.



BIG IDEA 1: THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE -- the people of God.

Nowhere does the NT refer to the church in geographical or architectural terms. Ecclesia= Called out. Holy.

Ephes. 1.1 ... to the saints—But there are “boundaries.”

GOD chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world Eph 1.4

- a. to be holy and blameless
- b. to be adopted sons through Jesus Christ in accord with his will and pleasure 1.5
- c. to be made sons in redemption through Christ’s blood. 1.7

God makes known the secret (mystery) of his will 1.9 to be put into effect in the fullness of time

PURPOSE: To bring all things in heaven and on earth under one head—Christ.

[“**mystery**”—don’t get this confused with mystical and therefore fantastical—it’s like the secret of bread baking—the secret is not to get the yeast killed by using water that’s too hot. It’s not unknowable, just the key fact that makes it all work that no one tells you ahead of time.]

God’s will is the unity of all things under Christ. 1.9-10

We are destined (God’s Project) for his praise and glory

Who is the WE? 1.13 Those who

Heard the Gospel

Believed in him

Were Sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance
Until the redemption of those who are God's possession.

Where did the "church" come from? 1.3-14

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| 1. the will of God | FATHER} | |
| 2. Response to Jesus Christ | SON} | THE TRINITY RIGHT HERE |
| 3. Power of the Holy Spirit | HOLY SPIRIT} | |

The work of Jesus is the greatness of God's power. 1.15-23

- Raised from the dead
- Sits at God's right hand
- Above every name
- All things under his feet
- Head over all things—on behalf of [for] the church.

Curious phrase: the Church is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. 1.23
This is a huge expansion of the view of the church. Paul sees the church as the object of history—not limited to a segment of life called religion.



BIG IDEA 2: THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE BORN AND NURTURED BY GOD

Ephesians 2: Who makes the church?

2.1—And you (in particular) he made alive ...

Is everyone the church? Only those who were once dead to God, his purpose, his power, his light (2.5)

- Transgressions and sins
- Followed the ways of the world and of the ruler of the "kingdom of the air."
[KJV—"the prince of the power of the air"]
- Filled with the spirit of disobedience
- Passions of the flesh
- Desires of body and mind
- Like the rest of the world we were by nature objects of wrath.

But God—Eph 2.8-19

- Made us alive—by grace alone
- Raised us up with Christ
- Made us sit in heavenly places
- Made anew for good works NOT VICE VERSA



BIG IDEA 3: THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE CONTINUING THE MISSION AND PURPOSE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COMMUNITY.

Rom 9.6 Israel is not Israel because it boasts that it is Abraham's seed.
 He is a Jew who in his inmost heart has surrendered himself to God – R 2.28-29
 The church is the true Israel of God – Gal 6.16
 A remnant chosen by grace Rom 11.5
 Abraham's seed and heirs of the promises Gal 3.29
 The Church is the 12 tribes of Israel Jam 1.1
 "Chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation [true Israel] -- 1 Pt 2.9-10 Is 49.6
 "Nation of priests" -- Rv 1.6, 5.10 cf Ex 19.6

OT -- Israel is wife of God Hos 1-3, Jer. 3.1-5, Is 54.4-7; NT Church is Bride of Christ Eph 5.22-23, Rev 21.2, 9-11.

IN Eph 1 Paul sees the church as the object of history -- not just a religious institution. -- THE Kingdom of God.

THE SECRET REVEALED (EPH 3): Not Israel v the Church, but Israel **and** the Church are the means to the salvation of the world.

- Through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs, together with Israel, members together of one body and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. 3.6
- Now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known to the whole world and its rulers and powers that God means to work his Project, according to his eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him we [all] may approach God with freedom and confidence. 3.10-12.
- Don't be discouraged by my sufferings [or perhaps yours]; this is God's purpose. 3.13
- Remember that he is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. 3.20.



BIG IDEA 4: WE ARE CREATED INTO ONE NEW HUMANITY THROUGH THE CROSS

UNITY in Christ—ONE NEW HUMANITY (Adam?)

No ethnic division (146 times in NT Paul uses "in Christ") Eph. 2.11 ff.

- Because of grace, not particular commands (like circumcision). The false separation is done.
- Hope offered Gentiles brought near through the blood of Christ
- One NEW HUMANITY created through the cross. To create in himself ONE NEW MAN—making peace through reconciliation through the cross 2.15
- Temple is the habitation of God—built on the foundation of Apostles and Prophets 2.20
- Cornerstone is Christ 2.20
- Bricks are the members 2.21
- Dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Through Christ we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access to the Father by one Spirit. 2.18

BIG IDEA 5: THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Internally 4.1

1. Exemplify the fullness of God—walk worthy
Lowliness and meekness
Patience
Forbearance in love
Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Externally

ONE-NESS is to show Christ to the world

1. One body
2. One Spirit
3. One hope
4. One Lord
5. One faith
6. One baptism
7. One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

3. Diversity of gifts is to enable unity in serving the members of the body so that the whole body attains the full measure of the fullness of Christ.

Apostles

Prophets

Evangelists

Pastors

Teachers

So that the church functions as a healthy body ligaments and bones being trained to measure up to Christ.

The Church is to be the presence of Jesus in the World as a wife has unity/complementarity with a husband.

BIG IDEA 6: UNIVERSALITY AND EXCEPTIONALISM

Universality in race, ethnicity, abilities, gifts status, culture, sex, finances

—but **Exceptionalism or Distinctiveness** in community, faith and morals.

People of two worlds. The church is already the kingdom of God, but not yet is the will of God fully done on earth as it is in heaven. Keep in mind that the KINGDOM IS WHERE GOD'S WILL IS DONE.

Do not be partners with the immoral 5.7; for you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. It is shameful even to mention what children of darkness do in the dark.

Put on a new self—no longer living as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking, darkened understanding, ignorance in their core, given over to sensuality. Gentiles and Jews together put on Christ – neither Gentile nor Jew. Each gives up the old separate ways to exhibit the redeemed new humanity. This so the world might Know Christ.

Live in the new holiness; redeem the time (5.16). Redeem your relationships: wives and husbands have a head—Christ. Children and slaves also. We are all IN CHRIST. In heaven there is no favoritism.

BIG IDEA 7: GOD’S REDEMPITIVE AGENCY

The purpose of the New Humanity is to exhibit God’s Project in the world. The Church is to be the society in which God’s will is done, all in Christ exhibit symphony with each other, themselves and the world and enjoy fellowship with God himself. It is to be the KINGDOM visible. THIS IS THE CHURCH.



BIG IDEA 8: BUT IT IS THE CHURCH AT WAR—the CHURCH MILITANT

It expects to become the CHURCH TRIUMPHANT AT THE RETURN OF CHRIST UNDER WHOSE FEET GOD MAKES EVERYTHING SUBJECT.

Therefore, the Armor of God

For we struggle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 6.12

Paul’s watchword is STAND—4 times he repeats “stand” and “withstand” in Eph 6.

1. Belt of Truth
2. Breastplate of Righteousness
3. Feet fitted with readiness of Peace
4. Shield of Faith
5. Helmet of Salvation
6. Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God.

Interestingly Paul asks for this prayer: that whenever I open my mouth words may be given to me so that I might fearlessly make known the “mystery” of the Gospel. 6.20

And he signs the letter, “Your Ambassador in Chains” And again, Pray that I may declare it fearlessly.

Can you imagine Paul intimidated by anything? Maybe he was more like us that we think.

THE BIG IDEAS RECAP:

BIG IDEA 1: THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE -- the people of God.

**BIG IDEA 2: THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE BORN AND NURTURED BY
GOD**

**BIG IDEA 3: THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE CONTINUING THE
MISSION AND PURPOSE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COMMUNITY.**

**BIG IDEA 4: WE ARE CREATED INTO ONE NEW HUMANITY
THROUGH THE CROSS**

BIG IDEA 5: THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

BIG IDEA 6: UNIVERSALITY AND EXCEPTIONALISM

BIG IDEA 7: GOD’S REDEMPITIVE AGENCY

**BIG IDEA 8: BUT IT IS THE CHURCH AT WAR—the CHURCH
MILITANT**

The Bible Project 2.04

Consider the following if you choose to prepare for the next class:^{[1][2]}_[SEP]

Read 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and 1 Peter.

Read “Between Two Worlds: The Kingdom and the Church,” John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*.
(Handout)

Markers

Eph 1	God brings all things together under Christ
Eph 2	Saved through faith by grace to do good works
Eph 6	The Armor of God