

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION (1)

BACKGROUND

Author: The apostle Paul (1:1).

Time of Writing: Approximately A.D. 64.

Place of Writing: Rome, where Paul was imprisoned (3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Acts 28:30).

Recipients: The saints in Ephesus (1:1)

SCRIPTURE READING

[Section 1]

1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church.

1:23 Which is **His Body**, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into **one new man**, so making peace,

[Section 2]

2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints and members of the **household of God**,

2:20 Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone;

2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a **dwelling place** of God in spirit.

5:25 Husbands, love your **wives** even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,

6:10 Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.

6:11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to **stand against** the stratagems of the devil

[Sections 3 & 4]

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ,

1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,

1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

QUESTIONS

SECTION 1

1. What does the word 'fullness' mean? How is it different from 'riches'? Use an illustration to explain this.
2. What is the significant difference between the church as the body of Christ and the one new man?

SECTION 2

1. What are the seven aspects of the church as revealed in the book of Ephesians? Use one verse reference to support each aspect.
2. How do you show that the church is the kingdom of God from Ephesians 2:19? Explain how it relates to our participation in sharing the rights and bearing the responsibility.
3. Explain: "The church cannot always be a family; it must also be the kingdom of God."
4. What is the significant difference between the church as the bride of Christ and the church as the warrior?

SECTION 3

1. Please share briefly the contents of the book of Ephesians.
2. What is the special characteristic of the book of Ephesians? How is it different than the book of Romans?
3. What do we need to be delivered from to understand the book of Ephesians?

SECTION 4

1. Why did Paul address himself as an apostle of Christ? What does this standing give him?

2. Who are the recipients of this book? What are their characteristics?
3. What is the communication from the writer to receiver? How can we be in this communication?

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

----- [SECTION 1] -----

I. THE SUBJECT—THE CHURCH

A. The Body

The subject of the book of Ephesians is the church. Ephesians covers seven aspects of the church, the first of which is the church as the Body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. In order for a living person to be complete, he must have a body as his expression. The Body of Christ is the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The term “fullness” has been misused, misunderstood, and misapplied by today’s Christians. Most Christian teachers confuse fullness with riches. Thus, when Christians speak of the fullness of Christ, they think it means the riches of Christ. (However, although many Christians speak of the fullness of the Holy Spirit or the fullness of God, not many speak of the fullness of Christ.) According to the book of Ephesians, the word fullness does not mean riches; it means expression. The term the “riches of Christ” is found in 3:8, and the term “fullness” is found both in 1:23 and 4:13. Chapter one mentions the fullness of Him who fills all in all, and chapter four, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. According to 4:13, the fullness has a stature, and the stature has a measure. Because we have a body, we all have a stature. If we were a head without a body, we would not have a stature. The fullness of Christ is the Body, for 4:13 says that this fullness has a stature with a measure. Thus, we have the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This fullness is different from the riches. The riches have no stature. But the fullness as the Body has a stature, and with this stature there is a measure. Thus, this strongly proves that the fullness of Christ is not the riches of Christ, but the Body of Christ.

It is important to know why the Body of Christ is called the fullness. This is very significant. The body of a person is simply the fullness of that person, and this fullness is his expression. Likewise, the church is the Body of Christ, and this Body is

the fullness of Him who fills all in all. How profound this is! The whole universe is filled with Christ. As the One who fills all in all, Christ is exceedingly great. Such a great Person needs a great Body. This Body is the church. Hence, the church is the Body of Christ, His fullness.

The riches of Christ may be likened to all the rich foodstuffs produced in America. These riches are not for exhibition; they are for eating. As we eat of the rich American foodstuffs, these riches seem to disappear into us. When these riches are digested and assimilated by us, they become part of us. As a result, they are no longer the riches, but the fullness. Thus, the husky young American men, who assimilate so much of the rich American foodstuffs, are the fullness of America. By means of this illustration we can differentiate between the riches and the fullness. The riches are the food which has not yet been taken into us. But when the food is eaten, digested, and assimilated, it becomes the fullness. The riches of Christ are all the items of what Christ is. When we digest and assimilate into our being the riches of Christ, these riches become part of us, and we become the fullness of Christ.

Thus, the church is the Body of Christ, the fullness of the universally great Person who fills all in all. This is the first item or aspect of what the church is.

In 3:19 the Apostle Paul says, ***“That you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.”***

When Christ makes His home in our hearts and when we are strong to apprehend with all the saints the dimensions of Christ and to know by experience His knowledge-surpassing love, we shall be filled unto all the fullness of God. All this fullness dwells in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9). Through His indwelling, Christ continually imparts the very element of God into our being. We can be filled with God to such a measure and can attain such a standard, even unto all the fullness of God. In this way we fulfill God’s intention that the church should be the expression of God.

When the riches of God are in God Himself, they are His riches. But when the riches of God are expressed, they become His fullness (John 1:16). When we speak of the fullness of God, we imply that the riches of all that God is have become His expression.

We have seen that the fullness of God is the expression of God. According to John 1:16, the fullness of God came with Christ who is the embodiment of God’s fullness (Col. 2:9; 1:19). With Christ, the expression was an individual matter.

*“... the church which
is His Body, the
fullness of the One
who fills all in all...”*

~Ephesians 1:22-23~

This expression, therefore, needed to be enlarged, to be expanded, from an individual matter to a corporate matter. The church today is to be the fullness of God in a corporate way. In the church God is not expressed through an individual; He is expressed corporately through the Body, through the believers who have together been filled to the brim with the riches of Christ. Therefore, the fullness of God is embodied in the church. The church as the embodiment of the fullness of God is the expression of the Triune God.

The Greek word for church is 'ekklesia', meaning the called-out congregation. This indicates that the church is a gathering of those who have been called out of the world by God. As such, the church is composed of all the believers in Christ.

B. The New Man

Secondly, the church is the new man (2:15). In the universe there is just one new man; hence, the church is *the* new man. There is a significant difference between the Body and the new man. The Body requires only life, but the new man requires both the life and the person. My body has life, but my being as a man has a person. The church is not only the Body of Christ having the life of Christ; it is also the new man having Christ as the person. No doubt, this new man is corporate, for 2:15 says that Christ created two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles, into one new man. This means that two collective peoples have been created into the one new man. If we see that the church today is not only the Body, but a man with a person, our realization of the church life will be uplifted.

Most believers recognize that the church is the ecclesia, the gathering or assembling of God's called people. The Brethren emphasized this aspect of the church and even translated the Greek word ecclesia into "assembly," which is an accurate rendering. This, however, is an even less than elementary understanding of the church. A somewhat more advanced concept of the church is that the church is God's household or family. An even higher understanding of the church is to see that the church is the Body of Christ. The highest understanding of the church is that the church is the one new man. These four concepts of the church are like four levels in the educational system: kindergarten, elementary, high school, and college. We need to advance from the kindergarten level of the church, that of the assembly, to the college level, that of the one new man.

The relationship among Christians in an assembly, a gathering, is not very close. It is much closer and more intimate among those in the family, the household. However, we are not only members of

God's family, but also members of the Body of Christ, where the relationship among the members is still closer. Those in the assembly and the members of a family may be separated from one another, but the members of the Body cannot be separated from the Body unless they are amputated.

Wherever the Body goes, the members must go also; they have no choice. However, in the one new man the fellowship is even more intimate than in the Body. The new man is corporate and universal. There are many believers, but there is only one new man in the universe. All the believers are components of this one corporate and universal new man. May the Lord show us more light concerning the new

man!

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C. The Kingdom

The subject of the book of Ephesians is the church. Ephesians covers seven aspects of the church, the third aspect of the church is in Ephesians 2:19, where we see that the church is the kingdom of God. This verse says, "***So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens of the saints.***" The term fellow-citizens indicates a kingdom, for being a fellow-citizen refers to being one with certain civil rights, and civil rights are always related to a nation or kingdom. Thus, this verse reveals that the church is the kingdom of God and that we are the citizens of this kingdom possessing certain civil rights. As we enjoy these rights, we must also share the responsibilities. Hence, the church is the kingdom of God with both rights and responsibilities. If we want the rights, we must also bear the responsibilities. Sometimes, however, we may want to enjoy the rights without bearing the responsibilities. But we must participate in both, sharing the rights and bearing the responsibilities. This is the church as the kingdom of God.

D. The Household of God

Fourthly, the church is the household of God (2:19). The household is not a matter of civil rights, but a matter of life and enjoyment. At home you do not speak much about rights, for there you have the father's life and the enjoyment of his life. Thus, the

church as the household or family of God refers to life and enjoyment.

Many... like the family-type church life, but not the kingdom church life. This means that they always want to have a good time, a marvelous enjoyment. But we cannot always stay home; we need to spend several hours a day away from home to earn a living. We should have not only the enjoyment of the family, but also the responsibility of the kingdom. The church cannot always be a family; it must also be the kingdom of God.

E. The Dwelling Place of God

In 2:21 and 22 we see that the church is also the dwelling place of God. Verse 21 says that all the building is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. This refers to the universal building. Verse 22 says that the saints in Ephesus are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit. This is the local building. Universally the church is the temple in the Lord, and locally the church is the dwelling place of God in our spirit.

F. The Bride, the Wife, of Christ

In chapter five we see the church as the bride, the wife, of Christ. A bride is for the satisfaction of the husband. In speaking of when Adam was alone, the Bible says, ***“It is not good that the man should be alone”*** (Gen. 2:18). This word indicates that when Adam was alone, he had no happiness or satisfaction; Adam needed a wife. When Adam was given a wife, he had rest and satisfaction. Therefore, according to the Bible, the bride, the wife, is for rest and satisfaction. How could we be satisfied without rest? Being fully satisfied implies enjoying a full rest. A man’s wedding day is a day of satisfaction and rest. Because Christ loves the church, the church is His rest and satisfaction.

Christ’s love for the church is different from His love for sinners. Christians often speak about Christ loving sinners, but very few talk about Christ loving His wife. We used to be sinners, but today we are the wife of Christ. Whether we are male or female, we are His wife. The church is a wife for the satisfaction of Christ.

In the church there is no place for our natural life and fallen human nature. The human life and nature are not adequate to match Christ. In order to be His counterpart, we need to be one with Christ in life and in nature. This means that Christ and the church as one unit have the same life and nature. Furthermore, Christ and the church have the same image and stature. We should not merely know this as a doctrine, but see it as a heavenly vision. We need to see why we must receive Christ as our life and partake of His divine nature and, furthermore, be transformed into His image from glory to glory. We also need to see that we must attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ because we are to be Christ’s counterpart. If we see this vision, we shall be able to understand the type of Christ and the church in chapter five of Ephesians.

*“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints and members of the **household of God...**”*
~Ephesians 2:19~

*In whom you also are being built together into a **dwelling place of God in spirit.***
~Ephesians 2:22~

Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
~Ephesians 5:25~

Put on the whole

G. The Warrior

Finally, Ephesians 6 reveals that the church is the warrior, a corporate fighter. An army is composed of many soldiers, but a warrior is simply one person. The church is the new man, and this new man is a warrior. The whole armor of God spoken of in chapter six is not for the individual Christian, but for the whole church as the new man. As the warrior, the church deals with God’s enemy and defeats him.

If we put together all these seven aspects of the church, we see a wonderful picture of the church as the Body to express Christ, as the new man taking Christ as the person, as the kingdom with rights and responsibilities, as the family with life and enjoyment, as God’s dwelling place for God to live in, as the bride for Christ’s satisfaction, and as the warrior for fighting the battle and defeating the enemy so that God can accomplish His eternal purpose. This is the church.

What the church does is not as important as what the church is. The church is the Body, the new man, the kingdom, the family, the dwelling place, the wife, and the warrior. What we do does not mean very much, but what we are means a great deal. In such a church as described in Ephesians Christ is expressed. Through such a church Christ, the Person, is lived out. In such a church there is the kingdom of God with rights and responsibilities and the family of God with life and enjoyment. This church is also God’s dwelling place, Christ’s

satisfaction, and God's warrior fighting the battle for His eternal purpose. What a church this is!

As the church, we need to be all these seven items. Especially those who bear responsibility in the churches need to see the vision of the church presented in Ephesians. The church is not a school, a society, or an organization. It is the Body, the new man, the kingdom, the family, the dwelling place, the bride, and the warrior. This is the church, and this is also the subject of the book of Ephesians. Because Ephesians has such a subject, this book is inexhaustible.

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II. THE CONTENT

A. The Blessings Received by the Church in Christ

Now we come to the contents of the book of Ephesians. The first item of the contents is the blessings received by the church in Christ (1:3-14). Not many know the real meaning of the word "blessing." It is not such things as a new car or modern home. The Apostle Paul prayed that the church would have a revelation to see all the blessings it has received. Material blessings such as cars and houses do not require revelation to be seen. But all the blessings received by the church need revelation. Many Christians simply have not seen the blessings with which the church has been blessed.

B. The Apostle's Prayer for Revelation to the Church

After the revealing of the blessings to the church, the Apostle Paul prayed that the saints may have a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know the issue of all these blessings and the power to carry them out, so that the church may become the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (1:15-23).

C. The Producing, Nature, Position, Building, and Function of the Church

Following the mention of the church at the end of chapter one, chapter two shows us the producing,

nature, position, building, and function of the church.

D. The Revelation of the Mystery and the Ministry of the Stewardship concerning the Church

In 3:1-13 we have the revelation of the mystery and the ministry of the stewardship concerning the church. Not many Christians know what the ministry of the stewardship is. There is such a thing that is called the stewardship, and this stewardship has a ministry. The ministry of this stewardship is related to the church. Thus, not only the mystery concerns the church, but also the stewardship. In order to know the church, we must know the revelation of the mystery and the ministry of the stewardship. We shall cover these matters in detail when we come to chapter three.

E. The Apostle's Prayer for the Church to Experience Christ

Realizing that the matters of the mystery and the ministry of the stewardship are so profound, the Apostle immediately prayed that the church would have the practical experience of Christ (3:14-21). The church as revealed in the mystery and as ministered by the stewardship needs the experience of Christ. The Apostle Paul prayed for this.

F. The Walk and Responsibility of the Church in the Spirit

In chapters four through six we have the walk and responsibility of the church in the Spirit.

If we have a clear view of the contents of the book of Ephesians, the entire book will be set before us. We shall see the blessings: God's selection, predestination, sonship, holiness, redemption, sealing, pledging, and much more. Then we shall see the prayer of the Apostle for a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know the hope of God's calling, to see the glory of God's inheritance among His saints, and to realize the greatness of the power that has been wrought in Christ to produce the Body. Then in chapter two we shall see the production of the church, the nature of the church, the vision of the church, the building of the church, and the function of the church. In chapter three we shall see the revelation of the mystery and the ministry of the stewardship concerning the church. Following this,

we shall see Paul's prayer for the strengthening of our inner man so that Christ may make His home in our heart, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. This causes us to have the practical experience of Christ. Then, as revealed in the last three chapters, we shall know how to walk on earth, to bear responsibility, and to fight the battle for God's purpose. This is the content of the book of Ephesians.

III. THE CHARACTERISTIC

The book of Ephesians has a special characteristic. Unlike Romans, which speaks from the sinners' condition, Ephesians speaks from God's eternal purpose. In the opening chapters of Romans, we see the sinners' condition. In Romans 1 all kinds of sins are listed. But no such list is found in chapter one of Ephesians. This is because Ephesians speaks, not from the sinners' condition, but from God's eternal purpose. Moreover, Ephesians speaks from eternity, not from time, and from the heavenlies, not from the earth. The book of Ephesians brings us into eternity. Do not stay in time—get into eternity. Because Ephesians brings us into the heavenlies, we should not remain in our condition; instead, we should be in eternity and in the heavenlies. We are in God's eternal purpose, and we need not look at our condition. Rather, let us look at God's eternal purpose. Because we are so bound to our condition and enveloped in it, we need to be rescued. Ephesians does not care for our condition so much as it cares for God's purpose. It speaks to us from the heart of God's purpose. When we come to this book, we need to pray, "Lord, take me out of my condition, away from the earth, and outside of time. Lord, rescue me from my condition and bring me into eternity and into the heavenlies. I want to enter into the heart of God and into His eternal purpose."

To understand this book, we need to be delivered from our condition and brought into God's eternal purpose and into the heavenlies. If we read Ephesians from such a position, our reading will be different. The specific and particular characteristic of this book is that it is written from eternity, from the heavenlies, from God's heart, and from God's eternal purpose.

Ephesians speaks, not from the sinners' condition, but from God's eternal purpose.

V. THE WRITER

Now we need to consider the writer of this book. As we all know, the writer is the Apostle Paul. Ephesians 1:1 says, "***Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God.***" Paul was made an apostle of Christ, not by man, but through the will of God, according to God's economy. Because Paul was not a self-appointed apostle, but an apostle through the will of God, he had the authority that comes through God's will. This standing gave him authority to put forth the revelation in this Epistle of God's eternal purpose concerning the church. The church is built upon this revelation (2:20). Paul's being an apostle of Christ refers to his position, and his being an apostle through the will of God refers to his authority. As such an apostle, Paul was the writer of this book.

VI. THE RECEIVER

A. The Saints in Ephesus

The last part of 1:1 and 2 say, "***To the saints who are in Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***" The receivers of this book were the saints in Ephesus. This refers to their position. The saints are those who are made holy, sanctified, separated unto God from everything that is common.

B. The Faithful in Christ Jesus

The receivers were also the faithful in Christ Jesus. The faithful are those who are faithful in the faith, as mentioned in 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:7; and Jude 3. The receivers, the faithful in Christ Jesus, have not only a sanctified position, but also a faithful living. They live faithfully in their faith. In order to be qualified and positioned to receive this book, we need to be this kind of people. We must be the saints, and we must be the faithful in Christ Jesus. We must have a sanctified position with a faithful living.

C. Grace and Peace

Between the writer and the receivers, there was the communication of grace and peace (1:2). Grace and peace went out from the writer to the receivers. There was no gossip, criticism, accusation, or condemnation; instead, there was grace and peace.

1. Grace Being God as Our Enjoyment

Grace is God as our enjoyment (John 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:10). When God becomes our portion for us to enjoy, that is grace. Do not consider grace as something less than God. Grace is nothing less than God enjoyed by us in a practical way as our portion.

Father as our Father, and we have Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. Therefore, we are fully qualified to receive grace and peace from the Triune God. This is the introductory word to this book.

2. Peace Being a Condition Issuing from Grace

Peace is a condition that results from grace, that issues from the enjoyment of God our Father. When we enjoy God as grace, we are in a condition that is full of rest, satisfaction, and joy. This is peace. Grace is a substance, whereas peace is a condition. The substance of grace is God Himself, and the condition of peace is that which issues out of our enjoyment of God as grace. We all can testify of the peace we have when we enjoy God as grace... Life is grace. When we truly enjoy Christ as our life, we participate in grace. Then we have peace. What a life! What a peace! Now we can also say: What a substance! What a condition! We have the divine substance as our enjoyment, and we have the heavenly condition. This is the peace which we enjoy.

3. God Being the Creator to Us, His Creatures, and Our Father Being the Father to Us, His Sons

This grace and peace come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are both God's creatures and God's sons. To us as God's creatures God is our God, and to us as God's sons He is our Father. On the one hand, we are God's creatures; on the other hand, we are the Father's sons.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ Being the Redeemer to Us, God's Redeemed Ones

Grace and peace also come to us from the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Redeemer, and we are His redeemed ones. As the Lord's redeemed ones, we have Him as our Lord.

Grace and peace thus come to us from God our Creator, from our Father, and from the Lord our Redeemer. As His created ones, regenerated ones, and redeemed ones, we are positioned to receive grace and peace from Him. We have a threefold status: we have been created, regenerated, and redeemed. We have God as our Creator, we have the