

STUDY OUTLINE FOR THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIAN

Author: Paul

Date Written: It is commonly supposed that this epistle must have been somewhere between the years 63 and 65 A.D, during Paul's house imprisonment (See Acts 28:30)

Audience: There are arguments that this letter was a circular epistle written to the churches in Asia Minor, the reason for this is that Paul did not write in very familiar tone as he did to the Corinthians Galatians and Philipppians, there were no personal greetings, and just like in Colossian Epistle he said "I heard of your faith" as though he had never visited them (Eph.1:15, Compare Col.1:4,2:3). But evidence also abound that this letter was to the Ephesians; except for a few questionable manuscript which omit Ephesus in 1:1, almost all the reliable manuscript says the letter was address to the Church in Ephesus. Also, we were clearly told that Tychicus was sent to Ephesus (Eph.6:21, 2Tim4:12), it was about the same time he delivered the letter to the Ephesian, and also to the Colossians. Some suppose that this was the same letter that was copied to the Laodiceans, and this explain why Paul was not so personal in this epistle.

Historical Background of the Church in Ephesians: (Acts. 19)

It is admitted by all that the gospel was introduced into Ephesus by the apostle Paul. He first preached there when on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem, about the year 54 A.D. Acts 18:19. On this visit Paul went into the synagogue, as was his usual custom, and preached to his own countrymen, but he does not appear to have preached publicly to the pagan. He was requested to remain longer with them, but he said he must, by all means, be in Jerusalem at the approaching feast-probably the Passover, Acts 18:21. He promised, however, to visit them again if possible, and sailed from Ephesus to Jerusalem. Two persons had gone with Paul from Corinth-Priscilla and Aquila-whom he appears to have left at Ephesus, or who, at any rate, soon returned there, Acts 18:18,26. During the absence of Paul there came to Ephesus a certain Jew, born in Alexandria, named Apollos, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, who had received the baptism of John, and who taught the doctrine that John had taught, Acts 18:24-25... Paul, having gone to Jerusalem as he planned, returned again to Asia Minor, and taking in Phrygia and Galatia in his way, he revisited Ephesus, and remained there for about three years (Acts 18:23; 19:1 ff). It was during this time that the church was founded, which afterward became so prominent, and to which this Epistle was written.

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General Survey of the Epistle: The letter to the Ephesians may be called the epistle of the Mystry. There are at least five reference to mystery in the letter:

- ✓ The mystery of His will (Ch.1, v.9)
- ✓ The mystery of Christ (Ch.3,v.4)
- ✓ The fellowship of the mystery (Ch.3,v.9)
- ✓ The mystery of the church in union with Christ (Ch.5,v.32)
- ✓ The mystery of the gospel (Ch.6,v.19)

The epistle may be divided into two broad sections:

1. The doctrines that expounds these mysteries and
2. The practical implication of these mysteries in everyday living.

For the purpose of our study, the epistle will be divided into 13 sections.

1. THE GREETING (Ch.1, v. 1-2)
2. Thanksgiving (Ch.1, v.3-14)
3. Paul's Prayers (Ch.1, v.15-23)
4. The grace of God and the exercise of God's Exceeding Great Power in Salvation (Ch.2, v.1-10)

5. The Mystery of His will in Bringing the Gentiles into the Commonwealth of His People(Ch.2, v.11-22)
6. A minister of the Mystery of Christ (Ch.3, v.1-13)
7. The full implication of the fellowship of the mystery (Ch.3, v.14-21)
8. The Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Christian unity and Ministry to one another (Ch.4,v.1-16)
9. The Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Putting off the Old Man and Putting on the New Man (Ch.4, v.17-32)
10. The Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Have no Fellowship with the Unfruitful Works of Darkness (Ch.5, v.1-16)
11. The Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Spirit Filled Living in Domestic Relationships (Ch.5, v.17-33, Ch.6:1-9)
12. The Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Spiritual Warfare and the Fellowship of His Suffering (Ch.6, v.10-20)
13. Conclusion (Ch.6,v.21-24)

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. THE GREETING (Ch.1, v. 1-2)

- a). Explain key terms: (i). Apostle (*Apōstolē*) (ii) Saints (*Hagiō*) (iii) Faithful (*Pistōs*)
- b). Explain the concept of Grace (*Charis*) and Peace (*ēirēnē*) as used in verse 2.

2. Thanksgiving (Ch.1, v.3-14)

Discuss each of the following reasons for which the apostle blessed God: (*Please note and define key term in each of the verses as underlined, compare with various translations*)

- i. He blessed us with all spiritual blessings (*ēulogia*) in heavenly places (*ēpōuranios*) in Christ (v.3)
- ii. He has chosen (*ēklēgomai*) us in him before the foundation (*katabōle*) of the world (*kōsmos*): What was the purpose of His choice and how is that purpose to be reached? (v.4)
- iii. He predestinate (*prōōriszo*) us unto the adoption (*haiōthesio*) of Children, and made us accepted (*charistōō*) in the beloved . How was this done (v.5) and to what purpose were we adopted (v.6)?
- iv. We have redemption (*apōlutrosis*) through His blood and the forgiveness (*aphēsis*) of sin: What was the basis of this redemption and forgiveness of sin as shown in this verse?(v.7)
- v. By lavishing on us all wisdom (*sōphia*)and prudence (*phronēsis*), he has made known to us the mystery (*musteriōn*) of His will (v.8, 9): What do you understand by “*the mystery of his will*”? (v.10)
- vi. We have obtained an inheritance (*klērōō*) in Him: What is the basis for this inheritance? (v.11), what is this inheritance? (v.12), what guarantee do we have to the claim of this inheritance? (v.13-14)

3. Paul’s Prayers (Ch.1, v.15-23)

- a). What was the apostles main prayer focus as seen in verse v.17? (Please define the terms wisdom (*sōphia*), revelation (*apōkalupsis*) and knowledge (*ēpignōsis*) as used in this verse). Why is this prayer so important? (v.18a)
- b). Note and explain the spiritual blessings that follows when the eyes of our understanding is enlighten:
 - i. We may know (*eido*) the hope (*elipis*) of his calling(*klesis*) v.18
 - ii. We may know what is the riches of the glory (*dōxa*) of his inheritance in the saints v.18
 - iii. We may know the exceeding greatness of His power (*dunamis*) towards us. V.19: How great is this power as described in v.20 -21, what is the place of the church (His body) in the exercising of this power? (v.22-23)

4. The grace of God and the exercise of God’s Exceeding Great Power in Salvation (Ch.2, v.1-10)

- a). In section 3(iii) above, we learn of “the exceeding greatness of his power” what is the effect of this power in you as a believer as described in Ch.2:1-3?

b). Explain the following terms that described the state of every unbeliever before he or she is quickened (*Please look up various translation to see how this is rendered*):

- i. Dead (*nēkrōs*) in trespasses (*paraptōma*) and sin (*harmatia*)
- ii. Walking (*peripateo*) according to the course (*ainon*) of this world (*kōsmos*)
- iii. Walking according to the prince (*archon*) of the power (*exousia*) of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience (*apeitheia*). Who in your opinion is this prince? (c/f:)
- iv. Having their conversation (*anastrephō*) in the lust (*epithumia*) of the flesh (*sarx*), fulfilling the desire (*thelema*) of the flesh and mind (*dianomia*)
- v. Were by nature (*phusis*) the children (*teknon*) of wrath (*orge*)

c). Why did God chose to exercise His exceeding great power for the salvation of men (v.4 and 5)?

d). Explain the term “Quicken together (*suzōōpōieō*) with Christ ” as used in verse 5. (See Rom. 6:3-14 c/f Acts 2:38, 16:30-31, 20:21).

e) To what height has God brought the saved man? (see v.6)

f). What was the purpose of his salvation as given in v.7? Please expatiate on the term “the exceeding riches (*ploutos*) of his grace (*charis*)” as used in this verse.

g). How are we saved (v.8), and why did God chose that way to save us (v.9)? (Please expatiate on the concept of faith in salvation as seen in this verse. C/f Rom. 1: 16 - 17)

h). Compare his purpose in salvation as given in verse 7 and his design to achieve that purpose as seen in v.10. What do you understand by the phrase: “For we are his workmanship (*poieme*) created (*ktizo*) in Christ Jesus unto good work”

5. The Mystery of His will in Bringing the Gentiles into the Commonwealth of His People (Ch.2, v.11-22)

We saw in ch.1,v.10 that the mystery of His will is that in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather in *one* all things in Christ. In order to do this He took away the one thing that has caused enmity between God and man – sin, by the way of salvation. But this is not the end, all forms of natural division and distinction that was caused by sin and the fall must be put aside if everything must be gathered into *one*. Before now, only the nation of Israel had any dealings with God by virtue of His election, this dealings was so that the Christ of God may be introduced through Israel to the nations in the fullness of time, and in Christ a new humanity without distinction may be born.

a). Describe the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles as seen in v.11.

b). Note and explain the following privilege which before now was not available to the Gentiles (v.12):

- i. They were without Christ (without the messianic hope)
- ii. They were aliens (*apallotrioo*) from the commonwealth (*politeia*) of Israel.
- iii. They were strangers (*xenos*) from the covenants (*diatheke*) of promise
- iv. They had no hope in this world
- v. They were without God

c). Note and explain what Christ have done in other to make one people unto God. (v.13-17)

- i. We are made nigh (*eggus*) by the blood of Christ. V.13
- ii. He has become our peace. V.14
- iii. He has broken down the middle wall of partition. What does this “middle wall of partition” refers to? See v.15a
- iv. He made in Himself of twain one new man. V.15b. What does this “new man” refers to? (see Amplified)

d). To what purpose did Christ do all that was discussed in (c) above, and by what means was that accomplished? See. V.16

N/B: The cross of Christ is at the center of accomplishing the mystery of God will, in it sin and self which is the basis of all human division is slain, thus a new humanity, without any human distinctions is made. If we must live in the good of what Christ has done, then we must live in the principle of the cross, i.e death to anything self.

e). From the following notes, discuss how Christ effect the reconciliation.

- i. He came preached (*euaggelizo*) peace to them that were afar and to them that were nigh (v.17); what do you understand by “preaching peace” (See Rom.10:14-16).
- ii. He gave us access (*prōsagōgē*) through the Holy Spirit (v.18); What is the place of the Holy Spirit in effecting what Christ has done on the cross for our reconciliation? (See Eph.1:13 and Rom.8:16)

- iii. We are no more strangers (*xenōs*) and foreigners (*parōikōs*), but fellow citizens (*sumpōlitēs*) with the saints and of the house hold of God (v.19); what is the implication of this to us? (See Heb.10:24-25; 12:22-24, 1John.1:1-3) (comment: *Reconciliation with God will imply restoration of fellowship with one another*)
 - iv. He built us upon the foundation (*thēmēliōs*) of the apostles and prophets (v.20). (see also Acts 2:42, 1Cor.3:10-11, 1Pet.2:4-6). What do you understand by the phrase “Jesus Christ himself being the Chief corner stone (*akrōgoniaiōs*)”?
 - f). The Apostle gave the picture of this one new man as a building that is fitted together () (v.21). What does this imply? (C/f: Eph.4:15,16, Col.2:19)
 - g). What is the purpose of this building? (See v.22); How does this meet the heartbeat of God over the ages? (Compare Lev. 26:11-12, 2Sam.7:4-6, 1Kings 8:27 and 2Cor.6:16)
- God’s ultimate desire has always been to have a man (a corporate man), in whom He will dwell in Sabbath rest and show forth His glory (See Ps.132:13-14). God does not dwell in temple made by man, thus he is making His own temple of living stones (1Pet.2:4-6), in the end of time, this shall be fully realized. See Rev.21:3.

6. A minister of the Mystery of Christ (Ch.3, v.1-13)

- a). What “cause” did the apostle refers to in v.1? (See Chapter 2:21-23). How does he see himself in relation to this cause?”
- Comment:* The verses that follows i.e. verse 2 to 13 seem to be in parenthesis (Note the dash in most of the translations), the apostle had to make an emphasis, the thought then continued in verse 14. The emphasis here is as to his ministry in bringing the mystery of God’s will through.
- b). What do you understand by the phrase “the dispensation (*ōikōnōmia*) of the grace of God” v.2? How does Paul see himself in relation to this dispensation of grace? (See 1Cor.9:16-17; 1Tim.1:11-12, 2:7; Rom.15:15-16)
 - c). Read verse 3 and compare it with Acts 26:14-20, Gal.2:15-16. What is the revelation (*apōkalupsis*) Paul refers to?
 - d). The apostle said in verse by reading what he has written so far, we may perceive his knowledge in the mystery of Christ v.4; From all we have studied so far, what is this mystery of Christ?
- Ans: This is the mystery Paul often refers to: **the gathering up of a corporate man (both Jews and Gentiles) in Christ through the Gospel, in whom God will dwell and show forth His glory.** See Col.1:27.
- e). This Mystery of Christ has been from eternity (See Eph.3:11), but what made it special in this gospel dispensation? (See v.5, 11)
 - f). State and explain the three implication of this mystery for the nations as shown to us in v.6.
 - g). Read v.7-9, and note what was Paul’s responsibility and purpose in the gospel.
 - i. From v.7, what means were available to Paul to enable him fulfill his purpose? Are these means available to us today?
 - ii. How did Paul see himself in v.8? What lessons can we learn from this?
 - h). What do you understand by the phrase “the fellowship (*kōinōnia*) of the mystery” as used in v.9?
 - i). What is the intention of God for calling the church into the fellowship of the mystery? (See v.10-12)
 - j). Explain the following terms as used in the verses:
 - i. Principalities (*arche*) and Powers (*exousia*) in heavenly place () v.10.
 - ii. The manifold (*pōlupōikilos*) wisdom of God v.10.
 - iii. The eternal (*aion*) purpose (*prosthesis*) v.11.
 - k). What should be our responds to the call into the fellowship of the mystery? (see v.12, c/f Heb. 10:19-25)

Comment: In pursuance of this purpose, the apostle had many trial that could have discourage him and the churches v.13, the fellowship of the mystery will also mean a fellowship in His suffering. We shall study this in section 12

7. The full implication of the fellowship of the mystery (Ch.3, v.14-21)

- a). What was Paul responds in what God is doing is to bring the mystery of his will to pass as recorded in verse 14? What is the importance of prayer in bringing the purpose of God to fulfilment?
- b). “The whole family (*patria*)” v. 15; note the singular “*family*”, what family is referred to here?

- c). What do you understand by the phrase “the riches of His glory” v.16? Compare 1:7
- d). Note and discuss the following blessings Paul desired and prayed for the Church in Ephesians:
 - i. To be strengthen (*krataioo*) with might by His Spirit in the inner man v.16.
 - ii. That Christ may dwell (*katōikeō*) in your hearts by faith v.17
 - iii. That ye may be rooted (*rhizoo*) and grounded (*thēmēliōo*) in love v.17: What will be the result of this as seen in v.18 and v.19
- e). The ultimate result of the blessings Paul prayed for will be that they are “filled with all the fullness (*plērōma*) of God”. What do you understand by this? How does this relate to the mystery we have been discussing?
- f). Considering the possibility of the ultimate realization of the mystery, Paul burst into a doxology. What made him so sure that this mystery will indeed be realized in the saints (see v.20)? What will be the full implication of realizing this mystery as shown in v.21?

8. Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Christian unity and Ministry to one another (Ch.4,v.1-16)

This section opens the second part of the epistle which has to do with application of all the doctrines that have been establish. Paul again introduced himself as the prisoner () of the Lord (see3:1), and pointing to his suffering for the sake of the gospel, made certain appeal to the churches. One question in the heart will be: when we consider what the men of old suffered to preserve and transmit this faith to us, will the way we handle the faith today justify their suffering?

- a) “Walk () worthy () of the vocation () wherewith ye are called()”? What do you understand by this instruction?
 - b) How might we walk worthy of our vocation? (see v.2)
 - c). The second instruction here is that we “endeavor () to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond () of peace” What do you understand by this? What is the basis of this unity as seen from v.4-6.
 - d). How should the fact that “every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” v.7, help us to keep the unity of the Spirit.
 - e). Compare v.8 – 10 with Chapter 1:10, what was the purpose of Christ ascending and descending all the sphere of the universe?
- In order to fill all things with Himself and establish His authority over all realms, Jesus ascended and decended into every realm of existence, and gave gift to men, so that by virtue of the exercise of these gifts His influence might be felt in all the realms.*
- f). What are these gifts Jesus gave to the churches as seen in v. 11? (Explain each of the terms: Apostle (), Prophet (), Evangelist () Pastors () and Teacher ()). What is the purpose of these gifts as stated in v.12?
 - g) What is the purpose of these gifts as stated in v.12?
 - h). Read v.13 from various translation (including Greek Interliners), Explain each of the following terms:
 - i. ...the unity of the faith
 - ii. ...the knowledge of the son of God
 - iii. ...unto a perfect man
 - iv. ...unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

From all that have been seen above, what will be the singular and ultimate end in the building up of the body of Christ?
 - i). Note the word used for children () in v.14, what are some of the characteristics of spiritual infants? What are the threats that awaits such in fact?
 - j). From v.15 and 16, How may we grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ? Can anyone or group of persons possibly attain this fullness independent of other parts of the body? Why is Christian unity so necessary to the realization of the mystery of Christ?
 - h). What do you understand by the phrase: “the effectual () working in the measure () of every part”

9. Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Putting off the Old Man and Putting on the New Man (Ch.4, v.17-32)

We have seen the necessity of the unity of the Spirit, and fellowship if the church must come into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, by way of ministering to one another according to the effectual working in the measure

of every part. One major hindrance to this fellowship and ministry to one another is the manifestation of the old man. The apostle addressed this in this chapter and part of chapter 5.

a). The apostle instructs that we “henceforth () walk not as other Gentiles walk...” Expatiate on the following that describe the state of other Gentiles and how they walk:

- i. ...in the vanity () of their mind ()
- ii. ...Having their understanding () darkened
- iii. ...being alienated() from the life of God through the ignorance () that is in them
- iv. ...the blindness () of their heart
- v. ...who being past feeling ()

What is the result of these state as seen in v.19?

b). “But ye have not so learnt () Christ” What do you understand by this phrase? (See also v.21)

c). Read v.22 and v.24 and point out the difference between the old man and the new man

d). We are instructed to “put off concerning the former conversation () the old man” What do you understand by this? From v.23, how may we put off the old man, and put on the new man? See also Rom.6:1-18, 8:1-13, Gal.5:16, Col.3:1-4

e). Read v.25-32 and make a list of all that must be put off and all that must be put on. Compare this list with Gal.5:19-23. Expatiate on each of the items listed.

10. Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Have no Fellowship with the Unfruitful Works of Darkness (Ch.5, v.1-16)

a). We are instructed to be “followers of God” as opposed to “walking as others Gentiles work” (4:17). What is the chief character of those who are followers of God as seen in 5:2? What is our primary motivation to love? Comparing 1Cor.13, is it possible to love while one is still putting on the old man?

b). v.3-5 further list some of the works of the old man, point them. What will be the consequence of walking in these things as written in v.5 and 6?

c). What should be our stance with regards to those who live in such things? See v.7 see also 2Cor.6:14-1

d). Read 4.18 and compare with 5:8. What light is referred to here, and what does darkness represent? See Jn.8;12. How are we to walk as children of Light (See v.8-10. Read V,9 from various translations)

e). What should be our relationship and ministry to those still in darkness? Read v.11-13 and Matt.5:16

f). From v.14 how may we avoid being drawn into walking in darkness? See also Rom.13:11-14 and Isa. 60:1-2

g). “See that ye walk circumspectly () not as fools, but wise” Read this from various translations, What do you understand by this instructions? From v.16 give at least two reasons why we must walk circumspectly as wise people?

11. Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Spirit Filled Living in Domestic Relationships (Ch.5, v.17-33, Ch.6:1-9)

a). The instruction in v.16 is that we redeem the time. In order to do this, we have to act wisely. From v. 17 what does “be not unwise ()” implies?

b). Read v.18 from other translations, apart from the literal meaning of the phrase “not being drunk with wine” as used in v.18, what else could constitute debauchery? Can one in such a state possibly understand the will of God? How does being filled with the Spirit help us understand the will of God? (See also 2Tim.1:7)

c). Read v.19-21 and explain the following result of being filled with the Spirit”

- i. Speaking to yourselves in psalms () and hymns(), and spiritual songs()
- ii. Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord
- iii. Giving thanks always for all things
- iv. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God

The apostle further explain what this submission to one another implies as to our mutual obligations in our various domestic relations. The implication of this is that if we must fulfill God's will in all our domestic relations,

then we must be filled with the Holy Spirit, because it is only then we can submit one to another. Note that this obligations and instructions applies only as it is "in the Lord" (See v.21,21 and 6.1)

- d). Read v.22-24 and expatiate on what the relation of the wife to husband should be.
- e). Read v.25-29 and expatiate on what the relation of the husband to the wife should be. Explain the key words: Nurture (), and Cherish ()
- f). From v.30 -33, how does God see marriage? How does this relate to the mystery of Christ and the church?

Comment: Marriage is the most intimate relationship between a man and a woman, it is the only union that to a great extend can explain the mystic union of Christ and the Church. When we are called into the fellowship of this mystery, we have been called into the most intimate relationship possible between God and man.

- g). What is the obligation of children to their parents? What does it mean to obey and what does it mean to honour?
- h). What is the obligation of fathers to children? Explain these two key words "Nurture" () and "Admonition"()
- N/B:** Fathers are particularly instructed as to the nurture and admonition of their children because the scriptures views child training as a manly role
- i). v.5 – 8 gives at least seven attitude that should characterize the submission of the servant to the master, list and expatiate on them. What is the relationship between serving our masters and serving Christ
- j). From V. 9 What should be the attitude of the master to the servant

12. Practical Application of the Fellowship of the Mystery: Spiritual Warfare and the Fellowship of His Suffering (Ch.6, v.10-20)

In realizing the full blessing of the fellowship in the mystery, there will be opposition and suffering, we must prepare for warfare. This section tell us what that warfare is, and how it is to be fought

- a). How do we get strength for the warfare? V.10,11
- b). V.12 tells us what we wrestle not, and what we wrestle with, what are they? Explain the following terms as used in v.12: Principalities, Powers, Rulers of Darkness, Spiritual wickedness in high places
- c). What is the purpose of our warfare as stated in v.13
- d). Read v.14 – 17 from various translations, and list and explain each of the piece of armour, and how they are to be used.
- e). What is the place of prayer in this warfare? How does this warfare relate to the proclamation of this mystery? (see v.19-20)

13. Conclusion (Ch.6,v.21-24)

- a). V.21 shows practical fellowship between brethren in this mystery, How does the apostle describe Tychicus? Why is he sending Tychicus?
- b). Why is it important we always pray for the brethren as Paul did in v.23
- c). Read v.24 in various translations, what challenge do we have from that verse