

The Mystery of God's Eternal Plan and Your Place Within It

1. HEADLINE: Billions of Dollars for AI but No Clue About Ourselves

- a. The newest AI servers are fast—but not as fast as the Neural circuitry of your brain
- b. The key word in AI is “ARTIFICIAL” it is fast at accessing info but not thinking

2. As Christians we live our lives in 2 realms... A Physical & Spiritual Realm

- a. We have a physical body—but we have eternity in our heart.
- b. We are bound by time—but we live on the edge of eternity.
- c. Which is why we ask the deep questions: Why are we here? What is our purpose?

3. The answers are from God—and have to do with eternity...

this is what Ephesians is about! –God's Eternal Plan and Your Place Within it!

I. EPHESIANS: God's Eternal Plan

A. THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

1. THE CITY: Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia

- a) The 4th largest city in the empire: rivaling Rome, Antioch, Alexandria & Corinth
- b) It was the main trade port from the east—that provided commerce directly to Rome
- c) In Time the harbor filled with silt from the river and became unusable—
- d) The city began to decline and eventually became a Ghost Town—which is why the ruins are so well preserved.

- **A Temple of goddess worship** to Artemis (Diana) was one of **7 Wonders of the World**
 - a) 342 ft L. 164 ft W. 100 columns over 55 ft H—larger than the Parthenon in Athens
 - b) Half a Million people visited the temple every year during a yearly month long festival
 - c) It generated so much wealth that the priesthood became the bankers of the East,
 - d) accepting Deposits, Paying Interest and making vast loans to people and nations.

2. THE VOID: As prominent and wealthy as Ephesus was—

—it had a spiritual void: Ephesus became a center for Occult practices.

- a) Citizens turned to the Occult: Sorcery, Magic, Astrology, Witchcraft —
 - trying to manipulate dark forces for their own ambition and advantage.
- b) Ephesus was a dark place—and the Spiritual Warfare was intense! (**Acts 19:8-20**)
- c) Many involved in the occult burned their books worth several million dollars!
- d) After this a silversmith who sold idols sparked a riot in the city because Paul's preaching was undermining their influence and profits!

3. THE ANSWER: As Popular and Lavish as the Temple of Artemis was—

it was empty of meaning and hope—empty of any power to save.

- a) What a contrast to a few humble Christians who gathered to worship God in homes.
- b) Lives who were Born Again and set free from the bondage of sin and darkness.
- c) The Church was planned from before the foundation of the world—
- d) a spiritual temple of living people that will never be destroyed (**Ephesians 2:19-22**)

B. THE THEME:

1. THE THEME: The Mystery of God's Eternal Plan and Your Place Within it.

a) Why are we here? What is our Purpose? this is what Ephesians is about!

—God's Eternal Plan and Your Place Within it!

(1) Having peace with God through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

(2) Being Adopted into His Family the Church with an eternal inheritance

(3) And being set free to Live a New Life in Christ.

2. Key Phrase: 'Mystery' found 6x in Ephesians, more than his other letters

a) μυστήριον (mystērion) "a hidden secret, not obvious to our understanding."
"a hidden purpose, will or counsel" (Thayer)

b) NT: A mystery in ages past that is now revealed in Jesus (1:9; 3:3-4; 3:9-11)

3. Key Phrase: 'in Christ' 35x more than any other NT book.

a) All spiritual blessings are found IN Christ (Eph. 1:3, 7, 11; 2:5-7)

4. Key Phrase: 'Heavenly Realm' ἐπουράνιος (epouranios).

a) (1:3, 10, 20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12) The Heavenly Sphere or Heavenly Realm.

b) "The unseen sphere beyond this world" (Halley Bible Handbook p.728)

c) "Its meaning seems vague. It clearly refers to spiritual realms, especially those things pertaining to God's dwelling place. We might think the term refers simply to heaven, yet (6:12) refers to hosts of wickedness "in heavenly places."
In the broad sense, then, the term seems to relate simply to the spiritual realm."¹

C. THE STRUCTURE: is similar to most of Paul's letters: Doctrine / Application

1. First the doctrine (chapters 1–3), then the duty (chapters 4–6).

a) But Since the duty section ends with a description of spiritual warfare,

(1) Section 1: **DOCTRINE:** God's Amazing Grace (1-3) Our Riches in Christ

(2) Section 2: **DUTY:** Living Like Christ (4-6) Our Responsibilities in Christ

(3) Section 3: **DANGER:** Spiritual Warfare (6:10ff) Our Victory in Christ

D. THE MESSAGE

1. Our Blessings in Christ (1:3-11)

Blessed (v.3) Chosen (v.4) Predestined (v.5) Adopted (v.5) Accepted (v.6) Redeemed (v.7)

Forgiven (v.7) Enlightened (v.8-9) Given an Inheritance (v.11) Sealed (v.13) Assured (v.14)

a) Imagine being given an incredible gift but never opening it. Or knowing you are loved but never believing it. Or being rich but living a life of fear and desperation.

2. We are Saved from Death to Life (2:1-7)

a) Sin has separated us from God and places us under condemnation of wrath of God

b) God solved this problem by sending His Son to fulfill the Law and penalty of the Law

c) So we can be saved and raised up to be with Jesus in the Spiritual Realm

3. To Reveal the Mystery of God's Eternal Plan (3:1-12)

a) The unsearchable riches of Christ made available to the Church

b) That allows us to have access to approach God! (v.12; 2:15-18 NIV)

¹ David Pratte, Ephesians p.16

- c) *"that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (3:10)*
- d) This was the Mystery even Angels desired to look into (1 Pet. 1:10-12)
- e) This is why the Angels Rejoice when one lost sinner is saved! (Lk 15:10)
- f) That new Child of God now has access to approach God in a way only angels had!

4. To Show the Unity of the Church (4:1-6)

- a) The promise to Abraham was that ALL nations of the world would be blessed
- b) Isaiah prophesied that ALL Nations would flow into the House of God (Isa. 2:2)
- c) We can now have unity where there was division and discord.
- d) We can be one as Jesus prayed in the shadow of the Cross (**John 17:20–23**)
- e) Some think the Church was a Plan B temporary measure b/c God's chosen people the Jews rejected their King and He couldn't set up His kingdom on earth.
- f) But the Church was prophesied centuries before and is God's Eternal Plan.
- g) Marriage was not a Plan B bandaid but Plan A in Garden before Satan, sin or death
- h) In the same way the Church is the Bride of Christ (5:25-32) and family of God

5. To live a new life in Christ (4:17-24)

- a) We are alive in Christ – no longer dead in sins
- b) The old man was put to death in Baptism and the new man was raised from the dead to walk in newness of life
- c) Now we are a new creation in Christ and free from the bondage and slavery of sin
- d) So Paul teaches us how this looks in everyday life...

6. Walking in Love, in Light and in Wisdom

- a) Walking in Love (**5:1-2**)
- b) Walking in Light (**5:8-9**)
- c) Walking in Wisdom (**5:15-17**)

This is to be in all areas of Life—
Marriage, Family, Children,
Employers and Workers
Brothers and Sisters in the Kingdom

7. Spiritual War (6:10–20)

- a) This is not a cruise ship—it's a battle ship > We have an extremely powerful enemy
- b) This is Spiritual Warfare — so we cannot rely on our own resources
- c) We need the Full Armor of God and know how to use it effectively.

E. THE QUESTION: Why Did God Create Us? (**Ephesians 1:4–6**)

1. **THE DECISION:** 'Let Us make man in Our image' (Gen. 1:26)
2. **THE SETTING:** Before Time Began – 'Before the Foundation of the World'
3. **THE PURPOSE:** He Planned 'us... as sons.'
4. **THE FORETHOUGHT:** 'Predestined' Shows Intent, Design & Purpose
5. **THE MOTIVATION:** 'In love' 'according to the kind intention of His will'
6. **THE PROCESS:** by 'adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself'
7. **THE RESULT:** 'the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints' (1:18)
8. **THE REASON:** 'to the praise of the glory of His grace' (1:6)
'that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.' (1:12)

CONCLUSION:

1. You Are Created by God in the image of God for eternal life with God! (Titus 1:2)
2. Jesus went to the Cross to make the impossible possible (John 14:1-3)