

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 23 – November 7th, 2021

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalms 67-69

Proverbs 1-4

Readings in Class:

2 Samuel 17-24

Ephesians

1 Kings 1-4

Introduction to Ephesians

Ephesus, a town on the Western Shores of what is now modern-day Turkey, was the center of Paul's missionary efforts and ministry during his lifetime. The city was known as a center of Greek gods and goddesses and even Emperor worship since the area was known as home soldiers who had retired from service. This plays into Paul's description into the armor of God in chapter 6. The main thrust of the book of Ephesians is the flavor of spiritual warfare that they are engaged with.

From what we know, Paul spent more time with the Ephesians than with anyone else, almost 3 years. From the content of the letter, Paul knows the worship life and the context to this congregation at Ephesus. Except for Romans, Ephesians has been seen as the chief letter written by Paul, which was written perhaps in the year 60 A.D. Dominating the letter are calls to see the work and plan of God that has been achieved in Christ and how Christ is uniting all things to himself, and how the Ephesians are part of that call. The Gospel has also now reoriented all of life, as the last couple of chapters note how this calls for us to live in our various vocations.

A Brief Overview of Ephesians

1. Greetings 1:1-2
2. Prologue on Unity
 - a. Berakah Prayer 1:3-14
 - b. Thanksgiving 1:15-23
3. Proofs for Unity 2-3
 - a. New Creation by grace Alone 2:1-10
 - b. Gentiles and Israel 2:11-22
 - c. Paul's Apostolic Mandate to the Gentiles 3:1-13
 - d. Prayer and Doxology 3:14-21
4. Baptism Unites 4:1-5:20
 - a. Baptism into One Body 4:1-16
 - b. Baptism Clothes the Believer 4:17-32
 - c. Baptism Directs the Believers Walk 5:1-14
 - d. The Liturgy of the Spirit 5:15-20
5. Baptism Reorders Relationships 5:21-6:9
 - a. Husband and Wife 5:21-33

- b. Parents and Children 6:1-4
 - c. Masters and Servants 6:5-9
- 6. Baptismal Armor 6:10-17
- 7. Conclusion 6:18-24
 - a. Exhortation 6:18-20
 - b. Commending the Letter Carrier and Final Greetings/Blessing 6:21-24

Spiritual Warfare

Prominent in the book is the expression that Jesus Christ is seated above all. As the Ephesians walked around Ephesus, they would have been greeted by pagan gods and temples on every street. Knowing this, Paul notes how Christ is above all these so called gods and has triumphed over them all. 1:20-23 especially notes this theme, as does chapters 4-6, highlighting military metaphors of “keeping in step with the Spirit” and working against the powers of darkness, and instead keeping march by making music to the Lord with one another as we resist the evil days that befall us.

The Christian fight over the cosmic forces of darkness reaches a climax in chapter 6 as Paul describes the armor of God. Each piece is connected with a theme that Paul had made use of and described over the course of the book.

Marriage/Christian Life

Very few instances of Paul’s writings are as debated and abused as his words concerning marriage in 5:21-33. The focus of Paul’s discussion on marriage is not so much the practical nature of it, but his concern is what Marriage is pointing us toward. And that is that marriage is about Jesus and his bride, the Church. God planted a physical sign in creation to point to the work that Jesus has done.

To reflect this, husband and wife take up the roles that Christ and the Church proclaim. The husband, as head, loves his wife as his own self. He is called to die for her and to give the wife everything, as Christ has done for the Church.

The wife is called to submit to her husband. The language of submit, is not an image of coercion or force. It is done out of love and respect. Jesus himself submits to his Father and allows his will to be done. We see that submission, when understood as ordering oneself into the proper place, is done in order that blessing and life may be bestowed upon a well ordered family.

God’s Economy

While also introducing the themes of Ephesians, 1:3-14 is perhaps one of the most beautiful expressions of the work of the Triune God to work out salvation. This work is known as the economy of God and follows from before God created the world to the present moment and then on into the end when Christ recapitulates the entire creation to the Father.

Here we see that from before creation, God chose and predestined us into salvation. Then in the fullness of time, the Father sent forth his Son to accomplish the task of salvation and to unite all people together. This salvation and decision of God is then made known to us through the work of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel and the giving of the Sacraments. These seal us for the final day upon which God completes the work that Christ began in us. To give these, God has given the gift of the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers in order that this economy of God would be known, received, and given.