

**07.01.07 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.**

***Seeing Things Truly***

Bible Readings = Ephesians 1:18-32; 2:1-10

**Introduction:**

- (1) This week we begin a new series on the letter to the Ephesians. This is one of the truly magnificent portions of Scripture, and one whose message we need to hear constantly.
- (2) It is a book packed with wonderful teaching and brim full of the application of this teaching to the life of the people of God. It takes us from creation to new creation, with Christ himself as the key to the whole of the great drama of God's plan and purpose.
- (3) The teaching contained in this letter tells us things as they really are, when we are often prone to look at things as they seem. In this way, the teaching of this letter secures us in eternal truth.
- (4) While it does not discuss the means of God's redemptive work in detail (compared with Romans and Galatians in particular), it is nonetheless an epistle dripping with the truth of the magnificent mercy of God's grace, and brings us to see that all we have and are and will be is from and for God Himself.
- (5) Some very brief comments re authorship and destination: Pauline and specifically Ephesus, or a circular letter? (See comments in commentaries etc.) What we do know is that it has been written, it is magnificent, Paul's name is found repeatedly in it, and Ephesus makes sense as the prime destination, even for a circular letter, given the status of Ephesus as the chief city of Asia Minor.

***This week we hope to see the proper perspective from which we must view the world, the church, ourselves and all other things: namely from 'the heavenly places in Christ Jesus'. This will act as our introduction to the letter.***

**1. Some Observations About the Nature and Content of the Letter**

(1) Ephesians roots us in God, not in ourselves! We all know the problem of looking within ourselves in order to find any firm footing, and this letter takes our feet and places them on the Rock of God Himself.

- From beginning to end, all the action, initiative, plan and purpose and its culmination lies within God, not within ourselves.
  - All things are shown to be done by God 'to the praise of the glory of his grace' (Eph. 1:6); 'to the praise of his glory' (Eph. 1:12, 14).
    - There is a difference between these to which we will turn in due course, but 'the praise of the glory of his grace' is a phrase which has redemption primarily in view, while 'the praise of his glory' has the final accomplishment of the glorification of Man in view.

(2) In rooting us in God, the letter takes us to the actions of the three Persons of the Godhead.

- In particular we see the action of God the Father in predestinating and planning all things and bringing all things to their appointed goal for the praise of his glory;

- and the action of God the Son in becoming our incarnate redeemer, given as head over all things to the Church, in whom all things will be summed up as the great ruler of the cosmos;
- and we see God the Holy Spirit, who seals us in Christ for the fulfilment of the plan and purpose of God and who equips and empowers the people of God to live in the fullness of God's love.

(3) And as we have already hinted at in these comments, the letter takes us to understand the object of God's great plan and purpose: the Church

- Bear in mind C. S. Lewis' comment where Screwtape is writing to Wormwood (letter 2, *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 15) 'One of our great allies at present is the Church itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean the Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy. But fortunately it is quite invisible to these humans. All your patient sees is the half-finished, sham Gothic erection on the new building estate.'
- In Ephesians the Church is presented in relation to the special work of each of the Persons of the Triune God, and thus depicted as the unique object of God's sovereign rule and his glorious grace. Indeed, the Church is shown to be the fullness of Christ (the fullness of him who fills all in all), and the Bride beloved by the Bridegroom, so that all of his sovereign rule is shown to be for her good. He is given (by the Father) as head over all things to the Church.
- And thus we are taken to see the glorious destiny for which all things have been created: the complete maturity of the people of God, until we all attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

(4) But this great presentation of the plan and purpose of God, and magnificent destiny allotted to the Bride of His Son, is shown to be something deeply opposed and resisted with real hostility.

- We read of the prince of the power of the air; of spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places against whom we wrestle; and of the need to take up the full armour of God to extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one.
  - But it is not as though we, as human beings, were or are innocent victims of the powers that rule in such a way. We ourselves were willingly aligned with them, we were children of wrath; we were darkness, and we did the deeds of darkness.
- So the hostility which the Lord must overcome is not simply that of hostile spiritual forces. We ourselves must be beaten and conquered by his grace.

(5) So this letter deals with pressing and expansive themes. However we would be mistaken if we thought that it was therefore 'theological' or 'academic'. The reality of the work of redemption on the one hand, and the nature of the spiritual battle on the other is worked out in the relational life of the people of God.

- See, for example, the matter of anger and related matters in Eph. 1:25ff. The whole of the latter part of the letter is filled with instructions about how to live in freedom, by not grieving the Spirit, or how to relate to wives and husbands, and workers, and employers and children and parents.
- An in particular, it is a letter saturated with prayer(s) and of teaching about prayer. Paul's prayers for his people are as important for us to pray for ourselves and other congregations as when Paul first prayed them for the Ephesians. And the

instruction about prayer is in some ways the climax of the letter...all these things have been written that we might take up the shield of faith and pray.

- Comment on relation to Grant's series here.

## **2. The Point from All Must Be Viewed**

(1) We cannot see things as they really are unless we see them from God's perspective.

- See, for example, the case of John in relation to Babylon and to the Bride in Revelation 17:3 and 21:10 respectively.
- So also is the case with Ephesians.

(2) The dominant note is that of the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all must be seen from this point of view. Take the Ascension out of Ephesians and we are left with the 'sham Gothic construction, half finished in the housing estate'.

- See the recurrent theme of the ascension in Eph. 1:3; 20ff.; 2:6; 2:18; 3:10; 4:7ff.; 6:12;
- Where are we, really?!! This is the place of battle and blessing.