

The Epistle to the Ephesians

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THE CHURCH AS SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD IN EPHESIANS

INTRODUCTION

Strange as it may seem to the masses of people in this world, that which the Bible calls “the Church,” is only remotely related to some man-made construction. The Church is not a mosque, an ornate temple, a cathedral or any building erected for worshipping God. The Church is not the Roman Catholic Church, nor the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal or Independent Church. The Church is an organism, not an organization. It is made up of all born again believers who, since Pentecost, have been baptized into Christ.

The world has it all wrong. Millions are confused because they are invited to join a local church. In reality, Christians do not join the Church, which is the body of Christ. They ARE the Church. They may worship in a building, but when the Church is not there, it is just a building, a building dedicated to be used for the glory and service of God, but nevertheless just a building.

In this lesson, you will see that the main subject in this Ephesian Epistle is the Church, presented by the Apostle Paul in six different ways. May God enrich your mind and heart with spiritual blessings.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON

- ❑ It is extremely important for all Christians to see clearly the difference between a church building or organization, and the true and living Church.
- ❑ It is important to grasp the significance of the various Church manifestations in order to gain an appreciation of God’s eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:11).

THE LESSON

I. THE CHURCH IS A BODY – THE BODY OF CHRIST

A. Verses that clearly state this fact:

1. Ephesians 1:22-23 – “...the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
2. Ephesians 2:16 – “And that he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross....”
3. Ephesians 3:6 – “That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body....”
4. Ephesians 4:4 – “There is one body, and one Spirit....”
5. Ephesians 4:12 – Certain gifts of ministry were given “For the perfecting of the saints...for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
6. Ephesians 4:15-16 – “...which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together...maketh increase of the body....”

The Christian life is Christ living in and through all who place their trust in Him for salvation (Galatians 2:20). When you received Him, He came into your heart and became your life (John 1:12). Christ is in you – the hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27). “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear...” (Colossians 3:4).

- ◆ *When you were saved, Christ came to live in your body and you became a part of the body of Christ, which the Bible calls “the Church.”*

B. How the Church is formed

1. 1 Corinthians 12:13 – “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body....”

2. 1 Corinthians 12:12 – Paul said that as our human bodies have many members but is just one body, “so also is Christ.” Just as every member of your body has a purpose, so every Christian has some gift according to the grace God has given. God expects everyone to use that gift for His glory (Romans 12:5).
So the Church today is a Body of all born again Jews and Gentiles, and each member of that Body has a function to perform. Each has a different gift “according to the grace of God” (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-29).
- ◆ *From these verses, we learn that Christ is the head of the Church. But in order for the head to function, it must have a body. Christ has ascended into heaven but the Church remains on earth and functions as the body of Christ.*

II. THE CHURCH IS A BUILDING OR TEMPLE – Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

- A. What do we learn from these verses?
 1. The Church is here called a building, or temple in the process of being built.
 2. Christ Himself is the foundation of that Church. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20).
 3. The apostles and prophets built on that foundation. The early local churches were grounded on the teachings of the apostles. “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...” (Acts 2:42).
- B. The prophets referred to in Ephesians 2:20 were New Testament prophets. Old Testament prophets did not foresee the Church and had no hand in its establishment (Ephesians 3:5, 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 29).
 1. The Church is being built “...for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22). Through the blessed Holy Spirit you are born again (John 3:5-6) and prepared as a dwelling place for God (Ephesians 2:22)!
 2. The Church is viewed as under construction. It will be complete when the last soul to be saved in this Age of Grace is saved, and Christ comes for His Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

III. THE CHURCH IS A MYSTERY – Ephesians 3:3-12, 6:19; Colossians 4:3; Romans 16:25-26

- A. What is a mystery in the Scriptures? The word “mystery” is found 28 times in the New Testament and at least 11 mysteries are recorded.
 1. In scriptural references, it is not something eerie or unexplainable.
 2. It is a truth not revealed in the Old Testament days, but which is now, in this dispensation of grace, fully revealed to us (Galatians 3:1-12; Romans 16:25-26).
- B. Paul says that he had been given a dispensation to reveal the mystery of the Church (Ephesians 3:2-3).
 1. What is a dispensation?
Basically the word dispensation means “stewardship.” Throughout biblical history, God, at various times, revealed particular truths and made man responsible for living according to that revelation. In other words, man was given a dispensation or stewardship usually involving a period in time.
Illustrations:
 - a) Exodus 20 ushers in the dispensation of law which ended at the Cross (John 19:30; Romans 10:4).
 - b) The dispensation of the grace of God was ushered in at Pentecost.
 - c) The Apostle Paul was specifically called by God and given the stewardship of proclaiming and explaining grace and the mystery of the Church (Ephesians 3:2-3).
 2. The prophets mentioned in Ephesians 3:5 were not Old Testament prophets. The verse says “as it is now revealed.” The Church was not seen or known in the Old Testament.
While God chose Paul specifically to serve as an apostle for and to the Gentiles, he definitely was not the only one to whom God had made known the mystery of the Church. Ephesians 3:5 says, “as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

- C. Ephesians 3:6-12 actually defines the mystery of the Church.
1. *That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs* – Here is the unveiling of the mystery. Gentiles were to share equally with believing Jews in the blessing and promises of the grace of God. Remember that the Jews were an exclusive group. They were and are God’s chosen people. The law, the covenants, and the promises were all theirs. They looked upon Gentiles with disdain. But remember what we learned in our previous lesson, “*WHEN THE WALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN.*” The wall separating Gentiles and Jews was smashed by the cross (Ephesians 2:14-16).
 2. *whereof I was made a minister* (Ephesians 3:7). – This does not mean that other Apostles did not preach the Gospel. Paul, however, was especially chosen of God to take the message to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).
 3. *And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery* (Ephesians 3:9). – Very few experiences are more precious than the fellowship that the members of the body of Christ have with one another.
 4. In Ephesians 3:10 Paul says that by or through the Church the manifold wisdom of God is made known to principalities and powers existing in the heavenlies, or heavenly places.
 5. In Ephesians 3:11-12 we see that the mystery of the Church was all in God’s eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ, in whom we now have boldness and access to the Throne of Grace by faith.

IV. **THE CHURCH IS “THE NEW MAN” PERFECTED** – Ephesians 2:15; 4:13

- A. What does Paul mean by, “to make in himself of twain one new man” (Ephesians 2:15)?
1. The emphasis in this passage is on the person and work of Christ who by His death on the cross has abolished the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, “even the law of commandments” (Ephesians 2:15). He thus was able to bring together two bitter adversaries and form them into the Church, the universal Body of Christ, which is here called “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15).
 2. This in no way means that God has abandoned His plans and forgotten His promises to Israel. They are still God’s chosen people. They will yet be established in the land of Israel (Romans 11:2, 25-26). It means that in the dispensation of Grace, Christ has abolished the law as a way of righteousness (Romans 10:4). He has opened the door of salvation to all who believe, forming them into the Body of Christ, the Church, here called the “New Man.”
- B. In Ephesians 4:13 Paul says, “Till we **all** come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” What does Paul mean by this phrase? Bear in mind that Paul, in verses like Ephesians 4:22-24, Colossians 3:9-10, writes about our sinful nature as being the “old man” and about our new nature which we have in Christ as being the “new man.” In Ephesians 2:15 and 4:13 however, Paul is writing about the Church, the Body of Christ, as the “new man” and the “perfect man.” The word “perfect” used here and in Philippians 3:12,15 means “full maturity.” The Lord gave the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers for the perfecting of the saints (Ephesians 4:11-12). Christ’s desire is for the Church to grow into fully mature Christians and cease to be children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14-15).

V. **THE CHURCH AS A BRIDE** – Ephesians 5:22-23

In this chapter we view with awe one of the most precious and amazing truths related to Christ and the Church. Here we see the Church as the bride of Christ being prepared for a glorious wedding by the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. The comparisons are unmistakable:

- A. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church* (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).
- B. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it* (Ephesians 5:25). Christ died for His bride! He purchased His bride with His own blood (Acts 20:28)! Why? Why did the Bridegroom die for the Bride? The answer is found in the next two verses.

- C. *That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish* (Ephesians 5:26-27).

In Matthew 25:1-13, Christ speaks in a parable concerning His coming again. Christians are likened to the five wise virgins who filled their vessels with oil and trimmed their lamps. They were ready for the coming of the Bridegroom. At midnight they heard a cry – “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” Those who were ready went in with the bridegroom to the marriage. Those who failed to prepare for the coming of the Bridegroom were left behind. So will it be when Christ returns for His Church. It may be today! (Read also 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18.)

VI. THE CHURCH AS A WARRIOR – Ephesians 6:11-17

(For your exam, memorize the four fronts on which Christians are fighting a war.)

Whether you have realized it before or not, let me say to you now, if you are a Christian you are at war.

In 1 Timothy 1:18, the Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to “war a good warfare.”

In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul declares – “I have fought a good fight.”

In 2 Corinthians 10:4, Paul writes – “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”

A. THE AREAS OF BATTLE.

1. *THE WAR WITHIN* – the battle with our sinful flesh, the old Adamic nature.

- a) Listen to the great Apostle Paul: “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (meaning “disapproved”) (1 Corinthians 9:27).

- b) In Romans 7:18-23 Paul describes the battle all Christians have with their old, sinful, fleshly natures.

1) In Romans 7:21 he says, “...When I would do good, evil is present with me.”

2) In Romans 7:23 we read, “...I see another law (controlling influence) in my members, warring against the law of my mind....”

3) “...Who shall deliver me?”

The answer to Paul’s question in Romans 7:24 is found in the next verse and in Romans 8:1-4. Through Jesus Christ we triumph. The controlling influence of the Holy Spirit makes the power of an indwelling Christ a reality so that we are freed from the controlling influence of sin and death (Romans 8:2-4).

- c) Further evidence of the war raging between the flesh and the Holy Spirit is found in Galatians 5:17. Here Paul says, “For the flesh lusteth (or wars) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” Thank God for Galatians 5:16 which says, “...Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh....”

2. *THE WAR WITH THE WORLD*

- a) Remember first of all what Jesus said about the world:

1) John 7:7 – The world hates me “because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”

2) John 15:18 – “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”

3) John 15:19 – “...I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

4) John 16:33 – “...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

- ◆ *Dr. Harry Ironside defines “the world” as “an organized system, controlled by Satan (the prince and god of this world (John 12:31, 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4), in which people are trying to make themselves happy without God.”*

- b) The Apostle John in 1 John 2:15-16 gives further insight. John says, “Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Claim 1 John 5:4 – “...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Amen!

3. **THE WAR IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM**

- a) This is our battle with unseen evil spirits who operate from and in the evil principalities that exist in this universe. In Ephesians 6:12 Paul tells us, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (the heavenlies).
- b) Remember in Ephesians 2:6, Paul says that God has “...raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places...” (literally: the heavenlies). Even where we have our sweetest fellowship with Christ, we encounter Satan controlled, evil spirits who attack us (Ephesians 6:12).
- c) This is why we need to put on “the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11). Christ triumphed over all such evil powers and principalities, “...he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them...” (Colossians 2:15).

4. **THE WAR WITH SATAN**

Satan has been cast out of his first estate (Isaiah 14:12-15), but he is still the prince of this world (John 14:30) and has great power to blind, deceive, and destroy. Ephesians 6:11 speaks of the “wiles of the devil,” for which we need the protection of “the whole armor of God.” Further illustrations of Satan’s power are found in:

- a) 2 Corinthians 2:11 – This verse speaks of Satan’s devices of which we must be aware.
 - b) Luke 22:31 – Satan asked for Peter so that he might sift him as wheat. Satan is also able to sift you. To sift someone means to test him.
 - c) 1 Peter 5:8 – We must be sober and vigilant because Satan (Your adversary), walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.
 - d) Acts 5:3 – Peter rebuked Annanias and his wife Sapphira, asking them, “...why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?”
 - e) Acts 26:18 – Paul tells us God sent him to the Gentiles to turn them “from the power of Satan unto God...”
- ◆ *Praise God we can claim victory over Satan. James 4:7 says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” We can defeat Satan with “the Shield of Faith” and “the Sword of the Spirit.” Revelation 12:11 says “...they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony....”*

B. **THE WEAPONS WITH WHICH WE FIGHT – Ephesians 6:13-17**

(Learn the six weapons the believer has in order to fight.)

1. *The Truth*

Ephesians 6:14 – “*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with TRUTH....*”

In fighting this battle, there is no substitute for TRUTH. We must know what the truth is and be able to share and proclaim it.

- a) In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am...the truth....” Know Him, love Him, serve Him, and proclaim Him.
- b) In John 17:17 Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is TRUTH.” The Word of God, the Bible, IS the truth. Learn it, share it, preach it, and teach it.

2. *The Breastplate of Righteousness*

- a) The breastplate covers the heart. Get your heart right and make sure you are right with God.
- b) Christ is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30).
- c) When we believed, we were clothed with His righteousness (Romans 3:22).

3. *The Gospel of Peace*

Have your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Be prepared to walk and run with the message of the Gospel of Peace.

- a) Peace comes from knowing we are justified (Romans 5:1).
- b) Christ gives His peace to all who trust Him (John 14:27).
- c) Peace is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

4. *The Shield of Faith*

Note that Paul says, “above all.” Faith is the key to triumphant living. 1 John 5:4 says, “...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Ephesians 6:16 tells us that through faith we can “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,” which is Satan.

5. *The Helmet of Salvation*

The helmet covers your head. Know not only in your heart, but also in your head that you have been saved.

a) In 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul said “I know whom I have believed.”

b) 1 John 5:13 says, “These things have I written, ...that ye may know that ye have eternal life...” A soldier must know what he believes and why he believes it.

6. *The sword of the Spirit* which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

a) Christ resisted and overcame the Devil by the Word of God (Matthew 4:4-11).

b) The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is our only offensive weapon.

CONCLUSION

Finally remember that the Lord is on your side if you are standing up for Him. “The weapons of our warfare are...mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4). When the battle is over, we shall receive a crown (2 Timothy 4:7-8). “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:4).
AMEN!

Ephesians
Exam – Lesson 7

Name _____

Address _____

Multiple Choice – Circle the letter in front of the correct answer. Only one answer is correct unless otherwise stated.

1. The Church spoken of in Ephesians is: (Value 4 points)
 - a. the same as a mosque.
 - b. made up of all born-again believers since Pentecost.
 - c. first of all a building.

2. The Christian life means: (Value 4 points)
 - a. to receive Christ as Savior.
 - b. to be baptized and become a member of the local church.
 - c. Christ living in and through you.

3. Mark the Bible reference that shows that Christ comes to live in the believer. (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. Ephesians 1:22-23
 - b. Colossians 1:27
 - c. 1 Corinthians 12:13

4. The Church grows as: (Value 4 points)
 - a. Christians are baptized into the Body of Christ.
 - b. believers are baptized in the local churches.
 - c. church buildings are being built.

5. The head of the Church is: (Value 4 points)
 - a. God the Father.
 - b. Christ the Son.
 - c. The Holy Spirit.

6. The reference that shows the Church to be likened to a temple is: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. Ephesians 2:19-22.
 - b. Ephesians 5:19.
 - c. Colossians 4:3.

7. As a building, the Church is: (Value 4 points)
 - a. already complete.
 - b. incomplete but being built.
 - c. never going to be complete.

8. What was the relationship of Old Testament prophets to the Church? (Value 4 points)
 - a. They had a part in building it.
 - b. They did not foresee the church and had no part in building it.
 - c. They prophesied concerning it.

9. The meaning of a “mystery” in the Bible is: (Value 4 points)
 - a. a deep secret that God does not reveal to man.
 - b. an eerie story in the Old Testament.
 - c. a truth that is not revealed in the Old Testament but that is revealed in the New Testament dispensation of grace.

10. The mystery God gave Paul to reveal to men was: (Value 4 points)
 - a. election.
 - b. the Rapture.
 - c. the Church.

11. The real mystery of the Church was that: (Value 4 points)
 - a. Christians should organize local churches everywhere.
 - b. the Rapture would take the Church out of the world.
 - c. Gentiles and Jews would belong to the same body.

12. Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:15 “...to make in himself of twain, one new man...” means that Christ: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. by the cross makes it possible for people to become new creations in Him.
 - b. by the cross made all churches one church.
 - c. by the cross put away the enmity between Jews and Gentiles and brought them together.

13. The “new man” in Ephesians 2:15 represents: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. the new believer.
 - b. a new local church building.
 - c. the body of Christ.

14. Ephesians 4:13 shows: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. Christ’s desire for all believers to come to spiritual maturity.
 - b. Christ’s desire for all believers to become sinless.
 - c. Christ’s desire for all churches to be united into one great worldwide church.

15. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Christ and the church are compared to: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. the Church and a building.
 - b. a husband and wife.
 - c. Christ and his body.

16. Christ purchased the Church: (Value 4 points)
 - a. with His love.
 - b. by keeping the law.
 - c. with his blood.

17. The five virgins of Matthew 25:1-13 were left behind because: (Value 4 points)
 - a. they had their lamps trimmed.
 - b. they were not ready for the bridegroom.
 - c. they did not wake up when the bridegroom came.

18. In 2 Corinthians 10:4 we learn that: (Open Bible) (Value 4 points)
 - a. Christians have weapons.
 - b. Christians should be carnal.
 - c. Christians are not engaged in spiritual warfare.

19. The believer wins over the world by: (Value 4 points)
- a. prayer.
 - b. faith.
 - c. fasting.
20. The Church is whose body? _____ (Value 2 points)
21. 1 Corinthians 12:12 compares the Church to: _____ (Open Bible) (Value 2 points)
22. What is the meaning of “mystery” in the book of Ephesians? (Fill in the blank spaces) (Value 4 points)
- It is a truth not revealed in the _____, but which is now, in this day of _____ fully revealed to us.
23. A dispensation always involves a period of _____. (Value 2 points)
24. Match the reference to the area of conflict. (Open Bible) (Value 8 points)
- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| ___ The battle within. | a. 1 Peter 5:8 |
| ___ The battle with the world. | b. Romans 7:18-23 |
| ___ The battle in the spiritual realm. | c. John 16:33 |
| ___ The battle with Satan. | d. Ephesians 6:12 |
25. Name five of the six weapons the believer has in his fight against Satan? (Value 10 points)
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____

Decision Time

In this lesson you studied about the Church – the Body of Christ. Are you a part of that body of Christ? If you have never received Christ as your Savior you are not a part of his body. You are still lost in your sin and on your way to an eternity separated from God.

Today you can change that. You can become a part of the body of Christ if you receive Him as your Savior.

You can say something like this to God, (this is no magical formula it is only a suggested wording) “Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am not a part of your body. I know I am a sinner and you died for my sins on the cross. You rose from the dead and are living in heaven right now. I am sorry for my sins and ask you to forgive them. With your help I will turn away from my sin. Today I receive you as my Savior and invite you to become Lord of my life.”

Signed _____ Date _____