



THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS (ACTS 18 & 19)

Ester Petrenko: Epistle to the Ephesians

2nd Missionary Journey

After staying there [Corinth] for a considerable time, Paul said farewell to the believers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow. When they reached Ephesus, he left them there, but first he himself went into the synagogue and had a discussion with the Jews. When they asked him to stay longer, he declined; but on taking leave of them, he said, "I will return to you, if God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

Acts 18:18-21 NRSV



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Starts the 3rd Missionary Journey

"After spending some time there [Corinth] he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples."

Acts 18:23 NRSV



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THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS (ACTS 18 & 19)

"While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them. He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

Acts 19:1–10 NRSV



THE CITY OF EPHESUS

- The City of Ephesus, a key port city located on the western coast of Asia Minor.
- Capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor.
- Ephesus was an important trade centre, and among the richest regions of the Roman Empire.
- It also had a large Jewish community. The Jews settled in Ephesus since the 3rd century BC. In Paul's time, Ephesus had a population of between 200,000 to 250,000 people with 10,000 to 20,000 Jews.
- The Cult of Artemis (Acts 19). (E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus sunrise scene



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EPHESIANS & COLOSSIANS: SIMILARITIES

- **Common pastoral concerns** for the region (Asia Minor, distance between them ~ 205 Kms).
- Colossae seems to be dealing already with a division (Col 2:1–3:4), while Ephesians does not address a specific threat and only warns about the danger of false teaching (Eph 4:14).

(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EPHESIANS & COLOSSIANS: SIMILARITIES

Both letters share [the same] distinctive theological themes:

- Christ's supremacy over all creation, including his superiority and authority over spiritual powers;
- Believers' present experience of the new life in Christ;
- The comparison of the former and new way of life is expressed in terms of alienation and reconciliation;
- A common reference to the universal Church and to Christ as the head of the Church (his body); Paul's commissioning to reveal the 'mystery' of the gospel; the moral behaviour and relationships in the Christian community; and a particular focus on evil spiritual powers.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EPHESIANS & COLOSSIANS: DIFFERENCES

- Ephesians starts with an extended blessing (1:3–14) whilst Colossians has a hymn on the supremacy of Christ over all creation (Col 1:15–20; though this hymn has some similarities with 1:20–23).
- Colossians seems to be dealing with a polemic issue in the church (Col 2:1–3:4), which does not seem to be the case in Ephesians.
- **Unique to Ephesians** is the exhortation to maintain the unity of the Church, the contrast between light and darkness; the analogy between Christ and the Church and spiritual warfare.
- Colossians' final greeting refers to a number of individuals (Col 4:10–18) and this is absent in Ephesians. (E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

CENTRAL MESSAGE: COSMIC RECONCILIATION

- Where all creation (angelic beings and humanity) is under Christ's authority (1:9–10).
- This theme is further developed as:
 - **The reconciliation of *things in heaven* (1:10)** points to the subjection and ultimate defeat of evil powers through Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation (1:19–23).

(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

CENTRAL MESSAGE: COSMIC RECONCILIATION

- **The reconciliation of *things on earth* (1:10)** denotes the reconciliation of humanity (divided in Jews and Gentiles) in the Church (2:1–22; 3:1–14) and how the Church lives as a reconciling community (4–6).
- The ministries of the Church (as the body of Christ), the interrelationships in the Christian community and household (husband/wife, parents/children, master/slave) should reflect the gospel message and imitate God and Christ's love (4–6). (E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

THE PURPOSE OF EPHESIANS

To encourage and help believers to grasp the significance of Christ's reconciling work so that the unity and harmony of Christian community (in its various expressions, 4–6) expose exclusion and segregation. Thus, the Christian community becomes an agent of reconciliation for the rest of society and a model of God's ultimate plan of reconciliation in Christ. (1:10; 1:22–23; 3:10)

(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

THE STRUCTURE

- 1:1-2 Prescript: Recipients and Greeting
- 1:3-3:21 God's Plan of Reconciliation
 - 1:3-14 Eulogy: praise for God's salvific purposes
 - 1:15-23 Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for an understanding of the believers and the Church's role in God's plan of reconciliation
 - 2:1-10 God's gracious salvation: believers are raised and exalted with Christ and created for good works
 - 2:11-22 Christ's reconciling work: the Church of Jew and Gentiles
 - 3:1-13 Paul's commission to reveal God's plan of reconciliation
 - 3:14-21 Completion of the intercessory prayer for spiritual power, and Christ's presence and love in the believers

THE STRUCTURE

- 4:1-6:20 The call for the Church to live out God's plan of reconciliation
 - 4:1-16 To maintain the unity of the Spirit and growth as the body of Christ
 - 4:17-32 To live according to the new humanity in the Christian community
 - 5:1-6:9 To imitate God and Christ in the Christian community & household
 - 6:10-20 The final appeal: a reminder for the Church to stand firm in unity
- 6:21-24 Postscript: Benediction

RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

- 1:1-2 Prescript: Recipients and Greeting
- 1:3-23 Exordium
 - 1:3-14 Eulogy: praise for God's salvific purposes
 - 1:15-23 Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for an understanding of the believers and the Church's role in God's plan of reconciliation
- 2:1-3:21 Narratio
 - 2:1-10 God's gracious salvation: believers are raised and exalted with Christ and created for good works
 - 2:11-22 Christ's reconciling work: the Church of Jew and Gentiles
 - 3:1-13 Paul's commission to reveal God's plan of reconciliation
 - 3:14-21 Completion of the intercessory prayer for spiritual power, and Christ's presence and love in the believers

RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

- 4:1-6:9 Exhortatio
 - 4:1-16 To maintain the unity of the Spirit and growth as the body of Christ
 - 4:17-32 To live according to the new humanity in the Christian community
 - 5:1-6:9 To imitate God and Christ in the Christian community & household
- 6:10-20 Peroratio: The final appeal: a reminder for the Church to stand firm in unity
- 6:21-24 Postscript: Benediction

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

CLASS 2: DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 1:13-14

1:3-14 is a very long and grammatically complex sentence where three themes are examined:

- 1) God should be praised for his salvific purposes.
- 2) The work of Christ for us.
- 3) God did all this so that we would be his glory.

(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

1) GOD SHOULD BE PRAISED FOR HIS SALVIFIC PURPOSES

1) GOD SHOULD BE PRAISED FOR HIS SALVIFIC PURPOSES

There are three things that stand out as themes in this praise:

God needs to be blessed because he has blessed us with 'every blessing' (1:3). The blessing is (1) 'spiritual' (1:3); it is (2) 'in the heavens' (from Greek 1:3); and it is (3) 'in Christ' (1:3).

- 1) **'spiritual' (1:3) =**
'the things that belong to the Spirit of God'
They are visible, and must be visible in the believers already on this earth. (E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

- 2) **'in the heavens' (from Greek 1:3)** = the worldview of the ancient Mediterranean, especially its cosmology.

"It is often observed in the study of Old Testament prophets and in the New Testament, particularly in Revelation, that the heavens are God's dwelling place where things are decided. There is no doubt that what has been decided in the heavens, will come to pass also on earth. It is, in fact, already happening in Christ's Church."
(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

1) GOD SHOULD BE PRAISED FOR HIS SALVIFIC PURPOSES

Ester Petrenko: Epistle to the Ephesians

3) 'in Christ' (1:3)

= God's blessing of salvation is facilitated and fulfilled 'in Christ':

"Christ has been mentioned in 1:3 and 1:5, within God's thought and plan, but his work in particular is featured starting 1:6, (*his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved*) through a series of sentences which start with 'in whom' (in Greek, the NRSV has 'in Christ' or 'in him':

1:7 *In him we have redemption;*

1:11 *In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance;*

1:13 *In him you also, ... heard the word of truth...and had believed in him).*

(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

1) GOD SHOULD BE PRAISED FOR HIS SALVIFIC PURPOSES

Ester Petrenko: Epistle to the Ephesians

So, 1:3 indicates that God's blessing of salvation is assured in the heavens and is made visible on earth through Christ."

1) GOD SHOULD BE PRAISED FOR HIS SALVIFIC PURPOSES

Ester Petrenko: Epistle to the Ephesians

What are God's Salvific Purposes?

Terms relating to predestination in the whole passage bespeak of God's sovereign plan for creation (which Paul terms as a 'mystery', 1:9; 3:3, 5, 9,10) set forth in Christ (from the Greek "*which he planned beforehand*", 1:9).

(Taken from E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

1) GOD SHOULD BE PRAISED FOR HIS SALVIFIC PURPOSES

Ester Petrenko: Epistle to the Ephesians

What are God's Salvific Purposes?

God's plan was conceived before the creation of the world (the Greek suggest, before the 'conception' of the world) to choose the church ("*choose us*" 1:4)

- to be "*holy and blameless before him in love*" (1:4),
- to be God's adopted children ("*He destined us for adoption as his children*", 1:5)
- "*having been destined*", the Greek again "*have been chosen beforehand*", 1:11), and
- [*to be*] his heirs (1:14). (Taken from E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

2) THE WORK OF CHRIST FOR US

Ester Petrenko:
Epistle to the Ephesians

Disruption of God's Plan & Christ's Work

- 1:7 indicates that God's plan was disrupted when humanity sinned against God and needed redemption (1:7, 14).
- Paul later explains that humanity's rebellion against God is a result of an angelic rebellion in heaven (a cosmic rebellion) whereby humanity is enslaved by the devil who controls this world order (their state is described as 'dead' 2:1-3).

(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

2) THE WORK OF CHRIST FOR US

Ester Petrenko:
Epistle to the Ephesians

Disruption of God's Plan & Christ's Work

Therefore, **God's ultimate plan is carried out in Christ** as he atones for the readers' sins through the cross (1:7) and brings the reconciliation of whole creation (angelic beings and humanity) under Christ's authority.

This is what Paul means by to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (1:10; 1:19-23; 3:10).

(E. Petrenko, Letter to the Ephesians)

2) THE WORK OF CHRIST FOR US

Ester Petrenko:
Epistle to the Ephesians

No wonder, Paul lacks speech to express the praise for such amazing development, of which 'we' (1:3, 4, 6, 8, 12, 14) are witnesses today.

(Taken from E. Petrenko, *Letter to the Ephesians*)

Now, the revelation to the readers of God's plan of reconciliation (...*With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, 1:8b-9a*) requires a reason.

(Taken from E. Petrenko, *Letter to the Ephesians*)

3) GOD DID ALL THIS SO THAT WE WOULD BE HIS GLORY.

Ester Petrenko:
Epistle to the Ephesians

Why did God do all these things?

Four phrases of purpose are identified and they are connected by "to the praise of his glory" (1:6, 12, 14), except for the introductory one in 1:4.

We have been ordained beforehand by God to be holy and blameless before him in love (1:4) so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory (1:12). The redemption as God's own people (1:14) is for the glory of God.

(Taken from E. Petrenko, *Letter to the Ephesians*)

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

Paul sets the scene for a fantastic display of God's purpose to create a humanity and lead it from sin and death, through Christ's work on the cross,

- into a divine inheritance,
- into belonging to God, and
- into enhancing God's glory already in the world and when the times reach their fulfilment (for the *fullness of time*, 1:10).

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

This is the "good news of our salvation" and "the word of truth" (1:13).

For this, the Spirit of God has been given to us as a warranty and seal (1:14) to give us hope that everything works out just like God pre-ordained and planned.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 5:21-33

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

5:21 is a transitional verse which links 'be subject' (5:21; along with the verbs "speaking" ... "singing" and "praising" ... "giving thanks", 5:19-20) with the phrase "be filled with the spirit" (5:18).

This implies that *be filled with the Spirit* is also manifested in the mutual submission (*be subject to one another*) in the household as it displays Christ and the unity and harmony of the new community.

The Relationship Between Christ and the Church is a Model for the Relationship Between Husband and Wife

- This is seen in the use of the comparative words 'as', 'in this way' and 'just as'. This indicates that Christ brings a new orientation for the relationship between husband and wife.
- It is important to point out that 5:22-33 is not a blueprint for the relationship between [both] a Christian and a non-Christian couple but [only] between a Christian couple.

Paul's Presentation of a Christian Marriage is Countercultural.

Christian marriage is not about husbands to 'man-up' to their wives nor wives to 'stand-up' to their husbands. Rather, it is based on the loving and intimate relationship between Christ and the Church and what God intended for marriage from the beginning of creation (5:31) so to demonstrate God's eternal purpose (5:32).

In a marriage relationship, the wife is to submit to her husband (5:22, 24).

First, [in] 5:21 appeals for mutual submission [are] not based on hierarchical roles (wife submits to husband and children to parents, and slaves to masters), but on the understanding that they are part of the body of Christ (5:23, 30).

Second, the verbal form of "be subject" implies a voluntary decision based on the wife's new identity and service to Christ (*be subject ...as to the Lord, and ... Just as the church is subject to Christ...*, 5:22, 24) and not on the husband's demand for the wife to submit.

Third, the wife's submission is framed in how the husband exercises his headship in self-giving love, looking for the interests and well-being of his wife (see below).

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND

The husband's headship is patterned on Christ's headship over the church (5:23; comp. 1:20-23; 4:13, 15-16).

First, Christ's headship is exercised in the way Christ cares and protects the church from evil powers (1:21-22); supports the church with gifts for her to grow and develop (4:7-16); and continually loves the church as they grow in intimacy and unity (4:13, 15-16).

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND

Second, Christ's headship is seen in his servant attitude in dying for the church (5:25b; 1:7; 2:14-18; 4:8-10; 5:1-2).

Thus, the headship of the husband is not an opportunity for tyranny (for example, domestic violence and psychological or emotional abuse), or to rule over the wife and seek self-centred interests;

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND

but rather a self-giving love towards the welfare of the wife to the point of dying for her. A husband, well-grounded in his identity in Christ, cares and protects his wife against any potential threats and supports her personal development (for example, in education and profession) so that she can grow towards her full potential. The husband's self-giving love towards the wife deepens their intimacy and unity.

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND

Paul takes even further the husband's call for self-giving love towards his wife (5:25a, 28a, 33a).

The exhortation for the husband to love his wife is framed on Christ's love for the church (5:25b).

This love is not a superficial or 'feel good' love, but a selfless love to the point of dying for his wife (5:25c, comp. 5:2).

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND

This exhortation does not imply that solely the husband needs to love the wife but the overall framework of the household is for believers to be imitators of God and Christ's love (5:1–2), so loving relationships apply to the whole household (incl. the wife towards her husband).

The husband's love for his wife is also defined in the how the husband loves his own body, as further explained *he nourishes and tenderly cares for it* (5:28, 29b).

THE PURPOSE OF LOVE

The appeal for the husband to love his wife (5:25a, 28a, 33a) is framed within the overall purpose of God's plan of reconciliation revealed in the church (5:25b-27, 29b-32).

The purpose of Christ's sacrificial love (5:25b) is to present the church to himself holy and blameless (seen in the purpose clauses in 5:26a, 27a, 27c) as God intended from the conception of the world (1:4; 2:10).

THE PURPOSE OF LOVE

The holiness of the church is actualised:

- in her loving relationship with Christ and other believers (5:25b; 29b; comp. 2:19–20; 3:17–19; 4:1-16; 4:32–5:2); and
- in the purifying work of the Holy Spirit through the revealed work of the gospel (5:26c, the Greek term used "*the word*" is *rhēma* and it is only found in 6:17 denoting the proclamation of the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit; comp. 1:8, 13; 1:17–19; 3:5–6; 3:16–19; 4:2–3; 4:20–22; 4:30; 5:10, 17, 18b; 6:17).

THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

The Relationship Between Husband & Wife Portrays the Eschatological Hope for Christ & the Church (A)

- Christ's love for the church towards complete intimacy and union with the church (4:12–13; 15–16) is now realised in the unity of love between the husband and wife—the husband identifies the wife as his own body (5:28b) and one flesh with him (5:29a, and the two shall become one flesh in 5:31, a quote from Gen 2:24).

THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- This is based on the understanding that they (husband and wife) belong to the body of Christ (5:23, 30; comp. 4:15–16).
- Therefore, the loving relationship between husband and wife demonstrates and contributes towards the harmony and unity of the Christian community.

THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

The Relationship Between Husband & Wife Portrays the Eschatological Hope for Christ & the Church (B)

Paul goes even further to state that the *great mystery* of the complete union between Christ and the church at the end times (5:32) is now being displayed in the unity between husband and wife.

THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

In other words, an understanding of the Christ-Church relationship transforms so profoundly the Christian marriage (5:21–25, 28–31) that this union gives an insight of the complete union expected of Christ and the Church at the end (5:26–27; 4:12–13; 15–16).

The repetition of the relationship between husband and wife in 5:33 emphasizes that Christian marriage actualizes the relationship between Christ and the Church as part of God's saving purposes.