

Ephesians Chapter 1 Part One

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- [0 : 00] The Psalm of Jesus to age and school, children in our common good.
We look on justice through our ways, and all that freedom guide our ways.
We hear to God's strength to see the homes from all the terror free.
You live the night that you destroy, and spread themselves in serving all.
Receive for them your people's breath, the world when by your constant care.
- [1 : 33] Teach us to self our neighbors meet, the homeless help, the hungry feed, the poor protect, the weak defend, and to the friendless prove a friend.
The labor death, the lost reclaimed, for the love of Christ spread in his name.
So may the love of us remember yet, the cross will love and just his net, and hide in Christ the flair to scream, whose mercy answers all our need.
who lives and reigns our risen Lord, where justice she's the righteous soul.
Well, can we turn to Ephesians, Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1. And we'll read from verse 3.
- [3 : 11] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.
In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one he loves.
In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.
And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head even Christ.
Can we pray again briefly? Let's pray. Father we thank you for your word which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and which is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
- [4 : 37] Speak to us now we pray in Jesus name. Amen. I remember many years ago now the rugby world cup and usually they have an anthem, they have a song to introduce the programs on television, the matches.
And I remember Kiri, I think it was Kiri Tikhuana, that great opera singer, singing a song many years ago during the rugby world cup and it opened each of the matches on the television and I remember that one line in the song was a world in harmony, a world at one.
Can you remember that? A world in harmony, a world at one. And I want to speak about that this morning. You might think well where is this world in harmony?

Where is this world at one? Okay, rugby matches, great fun, but they didn't actually produce a world in harmony, a world at one.

Is a world in harmony, a world at one, just an impossible dream? On this remembrance Sunday, after a century of war, it doesn't seem to be getting much better, is a world at one, a world in harmony, an impossible dream?

[6 : 09] Is it ever going to happen? Well, I've come this morning to tell you that it is going to happen. It's going to happen. There's going to be a world in harmony.

There's going to be a world at one. The Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians with a torrent of praise.

You know verses 3 to verse 14 in the Greek is one sentence. There's no punctuation. I should have really tried to read the passage without taking a breath, but I decided not to.

But that would have perhaps given the sort of impression that Paul wanted to give. It's a torrent, an avalanche of words praising God for the blessings that we have in Christ Jesus.

Paul says he's blessed us with every possible spiritual blessing. Any blessing that he could have blessed us with, he's blessed us with in Christ. There isn't a single blessing that he could have blessed us with that he hasn't blessed us with in Christ.

[7 : 17] he starts way back in eternity, he's chosen us, he's predestined us, he's adopted us, he's redeemed us through the blood of Christ, he's forgiven us, he's accepted us, he's loved us, he's sealed us with his promised Holy Spirit.

But actually the climax I think in many ways of this list of blessings in this opening sentence of Ephesians is in verses 8 to 10, just look at verses 8 to 10.

He lavished on us his grace with all wisdom and understanding. So Paul says there that one of the blessings, in many ways the climatic blessing that God has blessed us with in Christ is wisdom and understanding.

Were you aware of that if you're a Christian? If you're a Christian, God has blessed you with wisdom, with insight, with understanding that other people don't have.

Did you know that? If you're a Christian, and you may not be a well-educated Christian, you may be a Christian with learning difficulty, with educational difficulty.

[8 : 38] If you're a Christian, if you know Christ, then you know more than Nobel Prize winners who aren't Christian. God has blessed us if we're Christians with wisdom, insight, understander.

Is that a surprise to you? Well, what is it that you know that other people don't know? Well, look at verse 9.

He made known to us, this is the understanding, this is the wisdom He's given us, He's made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will reach their fulfillment, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

So God says, Paul says, God has blessed you if you're a Christian with wisdom and understanding. You know things that other people don't know. What do you know? You know what God's goal is for the future.

You know what God's ultimate goal is. You know His plan. You know where history is heading. God has let you, if you're a Christian, He has let us read the last chapter.

[9 : 59] We know where things are going. Nobody else does, except Christian. Okay? God's revealed us the mystery, says Paul.

The mystery of His will. Now, this word mystery means a little bit different, something a little bit different in the New Testament than the way we use the English word mystery.

When we use the word mystery, we mean something puzzling, something hard to understand, something hard to solve, something like a detective mystery, Sherlock Holmes or Agatha Christie or something.

Hard to work out, but it is solvable, or soluble, no, solvable. You can't, you are able to solve it. Things like what happened to Lord Lucan, you know, Lord Lucan just disappeared, nobody knows where he went to, he just disappeared, it's a complete mystery.

things like what happens to all the byros I buy, I buy ballpoints in bulk, three, ten at a time, by now my whole house should be full of byros.

[11 : 12] When I open a door to a room, there should be an avalanche of byros, but whenever I need to take down a note on the telephone, I can never find a byro, and I can't understand why it should be like that, it's a complete mystery to me.

But that's not what the New Testament word mystery means. The New Testament word mystery means something that is totally impossible for human beings to know.

We will never discover it, we'll never work it out, nobody knows where history is going. It's a mystery, it's a secret, only God knows, and we will only know if God chooses to tell us, and what Paul says here is that he has chosen to tell us, and this is part of his grace towards us, he has blessed us by giving us insight, wisdom, knowledge, into the mystery, the secret of where human history is going.

What is God doing? What is he planning? Where is history going? what is his plan for the end of history? Verse 9, verse 10 sorry, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

So what is God's plan for the future? A world in harmony, a world at one, under the headship, one head, Jesus Christ.

[12 : 56] Everything in the universe, when the Bible talks about heaven and earth, it means the whole lot, everything, that God has created. It is all going to be one, under one head, Jesus Christ.

And that is God's plan for the future, and we know that, we've read the last chapter, and Paul says this is tremendous, this is part of the blessing of salvation, to know where things are going.

And it is heading for union under one head, Jesus Christ. Now, let's work this out.

The human race has been divided, as we've been thinking earlier, with the boys and girls, the human race has been divided by sin. Sin resulted in a breakdown of the relationship between man and God, God and man, but it also resulted in a breakdown in the relationship between man and man, man and woman, human beings.

That's why Genesis 3 is followed immediately by Genesis 4. Genesis 3, the relationship with God is disrupted by man's pride and sin. Genesis 4, Genesis 4, 3 that is, Genesis 4, the relationship between brothers is divided by pride and sin.

[14 : 21] And we have the first murder, the result of envy, wounded pride, hatred, anger, and it gets worse. As you read into Genesis, God even regrets that he ever made mankind because of the violence, the violence that he saw on the earth.

And even before Genesis 4, still in Genesis 3, the immediate result of the fall is a breakdown in the relationship between man and wife, man and woman. Remember how Adam blames his wife for what has gone wrong, for what he has done.

And there's a breakdown in the relationship between husband and wife. And since then, human history has been the story of war, struggle, between races, nations, tribes, castes, classes, sexes, ages, you name it, there's been conflict, there's been struggle, there's been competition.

throughout the human race, throughout human history. And what is the gospel? The gospel is that in Jesus Christ, God has reconciled sinners to himself.

That's 50% of the gospel. Did you think it was all the gospel? No, it's only 50% of the gospel. The other 50% of the gospel is that God in Christ has not only reconciled sinners to himself, he has reconciled sinners to sinners.

[15 : 52] And Paul's letter to the Ephesians is all about that. And in Ephesians, he tells us that this future community is under one head, Jesus Christ.

God has already begun to form it. He's already doing it. There is already a community under one head, Jesus Christ.

It already exists. Yes, it's the plan for the future, but it already exists in embryonic form, if you like, imperfectly.

it's already there. God's already forming this community under one head, Jesus Christ. And this community under one head, Jesus Christ, is called the church.

It's the church of Jesus Christ. The body of Christ under one head. It's the church. So that future community has already begun in an imperfect, preliminary way.

[17 : 10] That means that the church is the future. The future is the church. People keep telling us that the age of the church has passed. People keep telling us that this is a post-Christian society.

Well, it may be in Great Britain, but nothing could be further from the truth. The church is the community of the future. God's plan is a united community under one head, Jesus Christ.

And the church is it. It's happening. God is forming it. That's the message of Ephesians chapter 1.

Now, when you get to the rest of the letter, Paul shows how God is forming this community and he's forming it through Christ and particularly through the death of Christ.

And he works this out in chapters 2 and 3. If you go to chapter 3, go to chapter 3 of Ephesians, Paul uses this word mystery again or secret.

[18 : 30] And he says that God has revealed this mystery, verse 6 of chapter 3, to the apostles and the prophets. And what is the mystery?

What is the secret? Verse 6 of chapter 3, Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body and share in the promise of Christ Jesus.

So what is Paul saying there? He's saying that already this united community is being formed. How do I know that? I know that because Jews and Gentiles are now in the one body of Christ.

And Jews and Gentiles had been utterly divided and separate but in the one body of Christ, in the church of Jesus Christ, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles no longer apply.

They're being united in Christ in one body. Now that's so familiar to us that we fail to see how radical and new it was in the New Testament.

[19 : 37] One of the most obvious divisions in humanity is the division between Jew and Gentile. And this division between Jew and Gentile is actually a God given, God made division.

God called Israel to be separate, to be different from other nations and other races. And he gave them various distinctives that marked them out as different.

Circumcision, Sabbath, food laws. So it was very difficult for Jews to socialize with Gentiles or Gentiles to socialize with Jews.

And God did that deliberately because he wanted them to be separate. He wanted them to be different. He knew how liable they would be to be influenced by the immorality and the idolatry of the nations round about them.

So in order to keep them separate and different he gave them these particular distinctive marks. If Israel had just become identical with every other nation she would have been pointless.

[20 : 43] There would have been no point in her existence. the whole point was for God to have a nation that was different that believed in one God that believed in the Ten Commandments. And by living under God the idea was that Israel would attract Gentiles to her God the God of Israel.

Sadly instead of seeing herself as a witness to other nations she either turned from God and just became like the other nations or she looked down in pride and self righteousness on the other nations and so Jews at the time of Christ actually referred to Gentiles non-Jews as dogs and they weren't talking about nice little Buckingham Palace corgis either or Pekingeses or Poodle they were talking about half wild flea ridden rabid hounds that stuck their noses and all kinds of stuff on the on the rubbish tips outside every Jewish town that's how Jews thought of Gentiles and Gentiles didn't think much of Jews either anti-Semitism has been a feature of human society for millennia so the

Jews hated Gentiles and the Gentiles hated Jews and Paul says what's happened in the church Jews and Gentiles won Jews and Gentiles united under Christ in one body it's happening says Paul this is God's plan for the future and it started to happen no longer two separate cultures divisions nations Jews and Gentiles but together under one head this is the great secret this is the great mystery this is what God is revealing to us says the apostle Paul in Ephesians it was so revolutionary it was almost impossible for them to swallow even for people like Peter and Barnabas to swallow if you read the book of Acts or the epistle to the Galatians you find that Peter had real problems accepting that he could actually go and preach the gospel to a Roman centurion called Cornelius and eat whatever

Cornelius decided to give him remember how the apostle Peter was for some reason on his roof I don't think he was a roofer I think it was a flat roof and he was probably meditating well it actually says he was meditating or praying doesn't it on his roof which was a flat roof and the flat roof was used as you might use your garden or something or something like that and there he was praying and meditating and God showed him a sheep full of all kinds of food that he'd never eaten in his life before and he said get up Peter kill and eat and Peter said not so Lord which is a bit of a contradiction isn't it not so Lord a bit of a contradiction but he wouldn't do it and so he had to get the same vision three times until the penny dropped and Peter said I've got to go and preach the gospel to this gentile and I've got to eat whatever he gives me for me tea so off he went and preached the gospel to this gentile who got converted but even after that according to

Galatians he and Barnabas drew back from eating with gentile Christians and Paul had to publicly rebuke him for refusing to eat with gentile Christians this wasn't easy this was hard this was radical this was revolutionary this was the most obvious basic distinction among human beings and it was being abolished in Christ in the church now if this was true of the distinction between Jews and Gentiles if that is abolished through Christ how much more true is it of all the other man made distinctions in human society how much more true is it that they are abolished in Christ before I get on to that can I just explain how this distinction between

[25 : 15] Jews and Gentiles was abolished through Christ and particularly through the death of Christ if you've still got Ephesians open can you look at chapter 2 Ephesians chapter 2 verse 11 remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcision remember that at that time you were separate from Christ excluded from citizenship in Israel foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope without God in the world but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ for he himself is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations his purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two thus making peace and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross by which he has put to death their hostility that's a complicated paragraph isn't it you don't have to worry about the whole paragraph for now but let me just explain what

Paul is saying there he's saying that this distinction between Jews and Gentiles has been abolished broken down through Christ and particularly through the death of Christ or the cross of Christ or the blood of Christ which are all terms that he uses in this paragraph the distinction between Jews and Gentiles has been abolished through the blood of Christ how does that work well I'll tell you let me explain it to you Romans Paul's letter to the Romans the Gentile world lost in sin Romans chapter 1 Romans chapter 2 the Jewish world just as bad in fact probably worse because the Jewish world had actually had more knowledge and therefore were more guilty Romans chapter 3 therefore there is no difference there is no difference all have sinned and fallen sure so the Jews sinned the Gentiles sinned all of us sinned therefore no difference how can we be saved one way only through the attainments through the achievements through the righteousness through the doing and through the dying of somebody else namely

God's son Jesus Christ he is our only hope whether we're Jews or Gentiles nobody is saved by being better or superior to somebody else the Jews aren't saved by keeping the law they've broken the law Gentiles aren't saved by keeping any law either they've broken the law all of sin our only hope is to confess that sin and to ask God for mercy through what he has done for us through his son's death on the cross for Jews and Gentiles for our sin so nobody is better than anybody else and therefore the death of Jesus unites Jews and Gentiles they're just sinners that's all just sinners saved by grace alone saved by the blood of Christ alone and the

Lord Jesus unites Jews and Gentiles to one father he gives them one spirit and there's one savior one lord and that's how he unites Jews and Gentiles now if the death of Jesus unites Jews to Gentiles which is a God given distinction in the human race how much more are all other distinctions in the human race abolished through the death of Jesus the human race is divided not just between Jews and Gentiles it's divided between rival races rival nations rival tribes rival castes in India there's even a caste called the untouchable the untouchable rival classes in the United Kingdom rich and poor educated and uneducated management and shop floor husbands and wives men and women young and old why do these divisions occur well because one group thinks it's superior to another group pride that's what it's all about human pride white people think they're better than black people black people think they're better than white people one caste or class thinks it's superior to another class or caste people educated at Eton think that they're superior to people who are educated at

Bass Street Comprehensive if you don't know anything about Bass Street Comprehensive you've obviously never read the Bible men think they're better than women women think they're better than men young people think they're superior to old people old people look down their noses at young people Manchester United supporters think they're superior to Manchester City supporters well they're just right no no and even in the church there are groups that think they're superior to other groups in the church people who are demonstrative in their worship and praise look down their noses who are less at the people who are less demonstrative in their worship and praise and people who are less demonstrative in their worship and praise haven't got much time for the people who are more demonstrative in their worship and praise and so it goes on and on and on and on and what does the apostle for there. There's no difference. There is no difference. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Where is boasting? It is excluded, he said. Our only hope is the righteousness and the sufferings of someone other than ourselves. We are not saved by being better than other people, by being superior to anybody else. We're saved by Jesus alone, his doing and his dying. He is our only hope. Anybody who believes that, who thinks that they're better than another person, just hasn't understood the gospel. You haven't understood the gospel if you think that you are better, superior to another person. You haven't understood the gospel. So Jesus, by his death, removes all distinction and unites sinners who believe in him, who believe in him, in one body, the church. And this is the community of the future. This is the future. One community under one head, Jesus Christ. Therefore, chapter four, Ephesians chapter four, turn over to Ephesians chapter four. How do we conduct ourselves in the light of the light of these truths? In chapter four? In chapter four, Ephesians verses four to six, Paul describes this unity that we've got now in Christ. There is one body, one body, the body of Christ. Jesus is the head, the church is the body. He only has one body, one body, one body, one body. There is one spirit. The same Holy Spirit who is in me is in each one of you.

[33 : 51] And the same Holy Spirit who is in you is in every other believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's only one Holy Spirit and he's one person. He's not just a force, he is a person.

And that one person who is in me is in you and in every other Christian. One spirit. One hope. We've all got one hope for the future. We've all, we've already explained what that hope is. A world under one head, Jesus Christ. That's our hope. That's where we're going. That's the future.

One Lord, Jesus. One master. So we're not all little lords strutting about, trying to have our own way. We're all under one Lord, Jesus Christ. One faith. We all believe roughly the same things if we're Christians. We all believe the great truths of the gospel. Christ died for our sins. He was buried.

And on the third day, he rose again. One faith. One baptism. Well, that's not easy, is it?

But yeah, we all, if we're Christians, we all bear the mark of baptism in one way or another.

[35 : 16] Won't go into whatever way it should be this morning. But you'll have different views on that, I'm sure. But one, there's one baptism. One, one distinctive mark, well there are two distinctive marks. Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Two signs of a Christian. But the initiation mark, baptism, all Christians have accepted in one way or another.

One baptism, one God and Father of all. Brothers and sisters. One family. One family. So that's the unity we've got, says Paul.

How do we conduct ourselves in the light of that? Verse 1, I urge you to live a life worthy or in keeping with the calling you have received. This is who you are. This is what God has called you to. This is the future.

One community under one head, Jesus Christ. Therefore, live worthily of that. Live in such a way that people will look at you as a Christian community and say, well if that's what it's going to be like in the future, I want to be in it.

- [36 : 29] I want to be part of it. So what does this mean actually in practice? Verse 2, be completely humble. Be completely humble.

Humble doesn't mean pretending we're no good. Humble doesn't mean pretending we haven't got gifts that God has clearly given to us. Humble means appreciating the gifts of other people as much as we like to use our own.

And thinking they're as important as ours. Humility, said C.S. Lewis, is not so much thinking of ourselves less as thinking of others more.

It's not constantly thinking about how humble we can be or how humble we are. That's the opposite of humility. That's thinking about your humility all the time. So being humble is thinking about others more.

Not thinking about ourselves less, but thinking about others more. Humility is not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but thinking with sober or sensible or sane judgment.

- [37 : 43] It's looking to the interests of others as well as to our own interests. It is valuing others above ourselves, Philippians chapter 2. Be completely humble. Because there'll be no oneness.

There'll be no unity without it. If everybody wants their own way. If everybody wants to be number one. There'll be no unity. Gentle.

Be completely humble and gentle. Considerate. And careful in the way we treat others. Not responding harshly. Not being hard on others.

Treating them with consideration. Treating them with the consideration that we would like to be treated with ourselves. Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient.

Be patient. That word *macrothumia* means long tempered. It means, yes, long tempered. Long tempered. Which is the opposite of short tempered.

- [38 : 42] Be long tempered. The word means putting up with exasperating people for a long time. There's another word which means putting up with exasperating circumstances.

That's the word perseverance. That's good. But this is putting up with exasperating people for a long time. Long tempered.

You know, putting up with people who are slow to change, perhaps, in the church. And we would like to change much faster than they would want to change.

Putting up with it. Being patient. Waiting for God's time to come. As it will, in my experience. Does come, eventually. Keep teaching the Bible.

Keep teaching the Bible. Bearing with each other. Which is similar to being patient with each other.

- [39 : 44] But it says, bearing with one another in love. So it's not just tolerating people. It's not just putting up with difficult people. It's not just putting up with people we don't like that much.

It is loving them. It is being kind to them rather than dismissive or cynical or rude. That's the kind of behavior that promotes this unity that Ephesians is all about.

So have you got the picture? Is there ever going to be a world in harmony? A world at one? Yes, there is. It's coming. It's coming. It's God's plan.

It's God's secret plan, which is revealed to us, says Paul. We know it's coming. Great. You don't have to worry about it. It's coming. It's God's purpose.

A world united under one head, Jesus Christ. That's the plan. It's already started.

[40 : 50] It's called the church. And God has brought it about through the death of Jesus. God's purpose. It's called the church. It's called the church.

It's called the church. One Savior. It's called the church. It's called the church. It's called the church. And this is how we conduct ourselves in the church, says Paul.

God's purpose. In a manner worthy in keeping with our calling. What a glorious thing it is to belong to the church. Do you belong to it? Do you belong to it? Can I ask every individual here this morning?

Do you belong to the church? Do you belong to the church? If you belong to Christ, you belong to the church. Do you belong to our church?

You should belong to our church as well as the church. If you don't belong to the church, you don't belong to Christ. Can I make that clear? If you don't belong to the church, you don't belong to Christ.

[42 : 01] I'm not going to say if you don't belong to our church, you don't belong to Christ. But you jolly well should belong to our church and you should love it. It should be the high point of your week. When you meet with that community, which is God's plan for the future.

The high point of your week. And to be honest, if it isn't, if it isn't, if you're one of these people who spends as little time as you can possibly get away with, get away with your fellow church members and then turns up at business meetings to vote, if you're somebody like that, sometimes I doubt whether such people belong to Jesus at all.

To be honest. Do you love the church? It's his bride. The church is the bride of Christ. What an insult to somebody to say, well, I'm all right with you, but I'm not struck on your bride.

Terrible. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Are you in the church? And if you do belong to the church, is the church you belong to more united or less united because you were in it?

That's the question I'd like you to go away with if you're a Christian in the church this morning. Is your church more united or less united? Because you are in it.

[43 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.