

Introduction to Ephesians

Episode 3

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SPEAKERS

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Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece 00:01

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In today's message, we're revisiting pastor Alex's introduction to Ephesians, which begins as a history lesson. We encourage you to follow along in your Bible. Here is Pastor Alex.

Pastor Alex Catarroja 00:48

My assignment today is to introduce you to the book of Ephesians. And as I was praying and I was thinking about How am I going to introduce this book to you? This is what I came to, I thought it would be pretty neat.

Instead of me just giving you background information on the book of Ephesians of you can get that in your study Bible. And if you don't have one, you should get one, at least some reputable one and the MacArthur Study Bible is something that I would recommend.

But instead of kind of just giving you information, as far as the background is not that it's not important, I thought it would be neat if where we left off at John Wright, how did we get from John to Ephesians? How did we get to the point when the gospel of John ended, and then Paul penned the book of Ephesians. So what I like to do is I like to kind of break up our introduction into two parts. We're going to kind of take a call it a Drive Thru history at a high level, from the time of John, to the time of the penning of the book of Ephesians.

And then after we've got to that point, then on the remaining time we have, I want to let you know what to expect, and what the book of Ephesians is really all about, and what we can expect to prepare our minds for that study. Sound good? It has to sound good, right? Because I'm kind of, I'm kind of up here.

So with that, let's begin. So how did we get from John to Ephesians? And when we close the gospel of John, we have Jesus restoring Peter to his ministry, right to ministry. Then sometime after that, and we're all familiar with this. As you know, Jesus gives the Great Commission and that's recorded for us in Matthew 28. And let me read that for you. Verses 19 and 20. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and other Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. And Mark also records this great commission. And he said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved, but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

So after Jesus gave this great commission to His disciples, He commands them, don't you know, go to Jerusalem? Don't leave Jerusalem. But until, you know, until, you know until the Holy Spirit comes, and it was after these instructions that the disciples asked Jesus in Acts one, six through eight, so when they had come together, they're all they were asking him saying, Lord, is it at this time you're restoring the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, it is not for you to know times or epochs, which the Father has fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. And after Jesus gave these instructions, he was received by a cloud, right and ascended back to heaven.

And I'm just going to come out and say this. Jesus literally flew, he levitated like Superman. Do you ever trip off that? I mean, I can imagine him going back, right? I mean, I mean, really, he levitated, he was lifted up. He was received by a cloud. And he went back to heaven and Mark and Luke records this ascension. Luke does it twice, once in his gospel and once in Acts. What I'll do is I want to read that Ascension in Luke's account and x and it's x one, you know continue on verses nine through 11. And after he Jesus had said these things to His disciples he Jesus was lifted up there it is he was lifted up, flew, levitated, while they, the disciples were looking on, and the cloud received them out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky, while he was going, behold, two men and white clothing stood beside them. They also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come just in the same way as you have watched him go into heaven.

So Jesus flew away, and Jesus is going to fly back and actually, you know, if, in just a little tidbit here, we kind of get a lens into, you know, what are the capabilities of our glow? Rarefied bodies because we know that we're we are going to share right in that glorify by, you know, the same glorified body that Christ had when he rose from the dead. So I'm just throwing this out there. Don't be surprised if in our glorified bodies we can all be Superman's, okay?

After the ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem as Jesus instructed, and as they were waiting for the Holy Spirit, you know, Peter made a proposition to replace Judas office as an apostle, and he quoted Psalm 69 in Psalm 108. And there were two candidates. One was Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And after they prayed and cast lots, Matthias was chosen. Now remember this event because I'm going to go back to it and speak a little bit more on this later.

And as we know, the Holy Spirit finally comes during Pentecost and we're all familiar with that story and Acts 2 when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven, a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as a fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit was giving them utterance.

So here we have the outpouring of God's, you know, God's Holy Spirit to the believers and the apostles at that time. And if we were to take an estimate, like how many people were at Jerusalem, around the time of Pentecost, and if you were to kind of get an idea was hard to find that number. But if we were to kind of use Passover, how many people were at Passover, and we were to look at, let's say, Josephus, his estimation there was probably more than 2 million Jews at the time of Pentecost that were there and when they heard, you know, this large, violent rushing wind, they all came in flocked to where the apostles and the disciples were staying. And when they arrived, they were they saw that they were filled with some was going on. But then they began to speak with other tongues, and these are languages.

So here's what's going on the Jews and everyone came and they all had different dialects, right? They all came from outside of Jerusalem, and they each heard when they went them speaking in their own dialect, the mighty deeds of God and some were amazed and some scuffed, then Peter speaks to them and he preaches them the great sermon to that crowd and he tells them that what they are witnessing is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and that was prophesied by Joel. And then Peter proclaimed that Jesus was the Promised Messiah, and that although Jesus was killed at the hands The Romans, that this was part of God's predetermined plan. And because Jesus is the Promised Messiah, God gave evidence of this by raising him from the dead.

And at that great sermon, many Jews were pierced to the heart and repented and God saved. And Luke tells us that there was about 3000 Jews that turned to Christ. So from there, Peter and John, they continue to minister and John was perfect, you know, and they were performing signs and wonders, and we're preaching the gospel.

So then they both eventually get arrested by the Jewish leaders and they get thrown into jail. And then they were warned by the Jewish leaders not to preach the gospel, and then they released them. But the apostles continued to minister and they continue to perform signs and wonders, preach the gospel, and the church was continuing to grow.

And Peter and the apostles get arrested again by the Jewish leaders and they get put into jail. And then this time when they got thrown into jail. And Angel sets them free and instructs them to continue to preach to the people in the temple, which they did. And then they were again brought before the Jewish leaders not to preach the gospel. In this time they were flogged before they were released. And at that flogging the apostles rejoice because they were considered to be worthy to suffer for bearing Christ's name.

But they continue to preach the gospel boldly, and publicly and the Word of God continued to spread and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem. Even many of the priests were becoming converted, and then were introduced to a man named Steven, who Luke described as being full of grace and power. And just like the apostles, this Stephen guy, he was performing great wonders and signs among the people. So this Stephen guy, he was debating against the Greek speaking Jews. He was debating vehemently from the script And they couldn't stand against his wisdom. Whatever. Whenever Stephen debated against these Greek speaking Jews, he, Stephen was proven to be right through the Scripture. So the people stirred up the crowd and the Jewish leaders and then Stephen gets arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. And then many false witnesses came forward, and they started accusing Stephen of desecrating the temple and speaking against the law of Moses.

And then Stephen gives his defense and a great sermon. It's one of the greatest sermons, probably the greatest sermons recorded in Scripture, and that is in Acts chapter seven. So what Stephen does is he rebukes his accusers, for sharing the same guilt as their forefathers. And he gave the example and he goes back to the Old Testament, and he's telling these Jewish leaders and the Jews, and he says, because, you know, just as your forefathers were jealous and they rebelled against Joseph and Moses, yet God rescued them. Do you know your forefathers that you are mimicking? They rebelled against Joseph. they rebelled against Moses, and you're doing the same thing. But guess what? God was with them.

And despite their mistreatment, check this out: And this is how gracious God is, even though they rebelled, even though their forefathers rebelled, that God in His grace, he preserved the nation. He still preserved Israel, through the famine right through Joseph. And he also right through Moses, even though they grumbled against God and grumbled against Moses, time and time again, yet God was gracious and still rescued them and delivered them from bondage.

So after Stephen's great sermon, Stephen was stoned to death. And as he was being stoned, he gazed into heaven and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father and died and give up the spirit and want to talk a little bit about just that little tidbit. They're, usually we hear that you know, gee, you know God or Jesus is sitting on the throne right sitting. Here we say, we see that Jesus was standing and Steven saw him.

Why was Jesus standing and not sitting? So may I suggest to you that Jesus was standing so that he can receive Steven and his arms? It makes complete sense. So what does that mean for us? Do you know when we ran out let's say Jesus is sitting on a throne on the right hand of the Father. And as his children are dying, and receive their last breath, Jesus steps up from the throne and welcomes you, to

receive you into his arms. For me that's very comforting. But I want to suggest to you that's the best explanation that I can come up with.

So after Stephen was killed, Luke introduces us to a young man named Saul, who was there and approved of Stephen's death. So after Stephen was killed, great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. And then Saul went from house to house in Jerusalem. He began to drag believers, men and women, to have them thrown into prison. And as a result of this great persecution, many believers began to leave Jerusalem right and scatter away from Jerusalem and that would include fill up who's the scripture calls as the evangelist and the Holy Spirit move through fill up in a special way and fill up for for many signs and wonders and as a result, we have our first Gentile convert under Philips ministry by an atheist, and as that was going on, Saul goes and gets approval from the high priest to track down these believers who scattered and left Jerusalem to arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem, to have them thrown into prison.

And I'm sure most of us are familiar with what happens from there on the road to Damascus during Saul's mission to seek out and arrest believers outside of Jerusalem. Saul is encountered by the living Christ, and that's recorded for us in Acts nine, beginning in verse three, and as he was traveling, it happened that as he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, Who are you Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter The city and it will be told what you must do. The man who traveled with him stood speechless hearing the voice, but seeing no one saw God from the ground. And though his eyes were open, he can see nothing. And leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And there and he was, and he was three days without sight, and neither eat nor drink.

And, as we know, Jesus hand selected Saul as his chosen instrument, to be an apostle of the Gentiles. And as we know, Saul was his Hebrew name, and will later be called Paul, his Roman name. And remember earlier in my introduction, and I said, remember this, I'm going to come back to it when Peter made the proposition to you know, replace Judas his office. And he went to the Old Testament Scriptures, and then they cast it lots and then Matthias was chosen.

I know scripture is silent on this, but I'm going to make an argument. I'm going to make an argument that Matthias wasn't God's choice that Saul was. And here's why. To be an apostle, you have to be commissioned to be in the office of an apostle, you have to be commissioned by God Himself.

Here's some supporting scripture for that. It was Jesus who chose the 12 disciples, including Judas, and it was Jesus who commissioned them to be apostles and on the road to Damascus, which we just read. Jesus personally appeared and commissioned Paul. To be an apostle, in fact, as we'll get to a little bit later, both Barnabas and Paul will later be commissioned by the Holy Spirit to be set apart for their missionary journey. And that was the catalyst for all of the church plans and Pauline epistles that ensued, including Ephesians. And here here's, here's another argument why I'm going to make the argument that Saul or Paul was God's choice, not Matthias. At the time that the disciples or Peter cast lots. They didn't have the indwelling Holy Spirit in them. There's no mention that God commissioned

Matthias there's no mention that God approved the selection of Matthias and after the selection of Matthias. No other New Testament writer confirms Matthias is his office as an apostle. So if you're to ask me who replaced Judas office as an apostle? My answer is none other than the Apostle Paul. Not a bad consolation prize for the son of perdition, and here's the beauty. If we were to kind of look at what was the most horrendous act, that a human being did, you can make a lot of arguments right? What's the most horrendous act? What's the most highest treason that a human being ever committed to another human being? I'm going to suggest to you that the most evil and vile act was the betrayal of Judas of our Lord Jesus Christ. And only God can flip an evil act, flip it, twist it and can work it out so that we have what I want. I would suggest to you the greatest love gift that the church has ever been given. And that is the Apostle Paul himself.

So after Saul's conversion, he immediately begins to preach Christ. And Paul's mission, he changed from him, I'm going to go and persecute Christians, his mission chains. I'm going to preach Christ, but who does it go to first? He goes to the Jews first. So Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit began to move through Peter, and we have our first Gentile convert under Peter's ministry, and that is by a man named Cornelius. So Peter reports back to the rest of the apostles, that Gentiles are receiving the Word of God and are being saved. And this was evident and it was clear to Peter not only from the visions that he was getting, but also the manifestation and the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit where they began to speak in tongues and extol the mighty work, the mighty deeds and the mighty works of God. So now the rest of the apostles, no one they understand that the Gentiles are included in God's redemptive, redemptive plan and more reports continued to come to the church, to the church in Jerusalem, that more and more Gentiles are beginning to be saved in Antioch. And this is Antioch, Syria, not Antioch, California. And we're believers were first called Christians. So thus, the church leaders, they sent Barnabas, he's like, go check out Saul. To validate that this was the case and after Barnabas validated that that was the case. Barnabas whence he goes to find Saul, and he brought salt Antioch and it was at the church in Antioch, where both Barnabas and Saul were commissioned by the Holy Spirit for their first missionary journey to preach the gospel, plant churches and, and then here I'll just kind of give a little high level here: but, you know, Paul had several missionary journeys. So his first missionary journey, he traveled with Barnabas and John Mark. And pretty much they traveled for, you know, the route was Cyprus in Turkey and, and they covered about 1400 miles. So they started in Antioch in Syria. They landed on the island of Cyprus, and they went to the cities Cydia I conium. Lisandra, like, what are these? So these are towns in the Galatian region. So this is where we get the believers that were, you know, the church plant from these churches in the region of Galicia. And hence how we got the book of Galatians.

And it was during that first missionary journey, saw the scripture started to call him. And as a man He established churches in Galicia. And during that first missionary journey, Paul was stoned and almost left for dead. But then he got up and he continued on his missionary journey to bring the gospel. And then in a second missionary journey, this time he traveled with Silas Luke. And he happened to pick up Timothy along the way, and Priscilla and Aquila along the way, and that route they went through from to Syria, Turkey, Greece, and then back to Jerusalem. And that was actually, it doubled the distance they went from 1400 miles that they covered in the first one, this one they went to 2800 miles and there was some notable cities that Paul visited here and this is all in modern Greece, right Phillip... I mentioned

that in our in our communion message. Vessel Anika, Berea, and it was it was in Corinth, where Priscilla and Aquila were saved and the end of joy Paul and Paul ministered in Corinth for a year and a half. And it was there in Corinth that the Jews rejected the gospel, and Paul and Barnabas, and then on their way back to Antioch Syria.

Paul makes a stop at Ephesus. And this is the first mention of emphasis in the book of Acts, and that's in chapter 18. And in that account, Paul reasoned with the Jews for some time and he was invited to stay longer, but Paul declined stating that he will return if it's God's will, so that was his second missionary journey, and his third missionary journey. We are introduced to a man named Apollos he heard of that name, Apollos in Scripture, and Apollos came and preach the gospel in emphasis upon us was described in Acts chapter 18. As an eloquent man competent in the scriptures had been instructed in the way of the Lord and being forgiven and spirit. He spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla Nicola heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Certainly, if I were to ask you, you know, Bible trivia, who was responsible for the church plant in emphasis? It is likely the Apostle Paul, and a palace, and was assisted by Priscilla and Aquila. And towards the end of Paul's third missionary journey, Paul makes a final visit to the church in Ephesus, and that's recorded for us in Acts 20. And at that time, the church in Ephesus was established with elders over the church. And there you will find that Paul was charging them to remain faithful and preaching the full Council of God there. And then they close with heartfelt prayer and then they shed tears. Because Paul told them that this is the last time, I'm going to see you. And then at the end of Paul's third missionary journey, he arrives in Jerusalem. And shortly thereafter, Paul is in the temple, the Jew sees Paul dragged him out of the temple, and Paul was beaten, and they were seeking to kill him. And because of the uproar, the Roman soldiers intervened, and they took Paul into custody. And then Paul makes his defense before the Jews and gives his personal testimony. T

hen following this, Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin and perceiving, right, so he was brought before the Sanhedrin in the court, the Council, the Jewish leaders at that time, Paul, recognize that there were some among them that were Saducees who didn't believe in the resurrection and some were Pharisees who did believe in the Pharisees. And then Paul cried out that he was on trial for the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and then it caused a great dissension and Sanhedrin and then since Paul's life was in jeopardy, the Romans continue to keep Paul in their custody, and then Paul was subsequently transported to Syria and was brought before Felix the governor. So then the Jews followed and brought charges to Felix concerning Paul. So Paul stated his defense before Felix attesting that he's on trial for believing in the resurrection but is innocent to the accusations against him and wanting to please the Jews.

Festus kept Paul in custody for two years, and then he was subsequently succeeded by Festus and then the Jews came back and brought charges to Festus concerning Paul, Paul made his defense before Felix an appeal to Caesar. So Felix not knowing what to charge Paul discusses the case with

King Agrippa, who was in town and was visiting and discusses Paul's case with the king. And then Paul ends up making his defense before King Agrippa and shared his testimony.

And what was going on is when Paul was in custody by Rome, and when the trials, you know, continued to end and there was no formal charge to write, but Paul, because he appealed to Caesar was sent to Rome. None the less and we're getting towards the end.

I know this was a lot of history here. But as Paul was being transported to Rome, it was a very tumultuous time to say the least. And here they are just just a description. What did Paul and his company go through, as he was being transported right to Rome. They were caught in a storm. There was darkness for many days. The Scripture tells us for two weeks, they couldn't even see the sun. It was darkness for two weeks and they didn't eat for two weeks and it got to the point where they got into despair and they lost all hope of being rescued. And they end up even losing all their cargo and food. But then Paul was there, Paul encourages them. Paul admonishes them to listen to him. And Paul assured them that God is you know, an angel revealed to him that God will spare their lives if they listen.

And to make just to kind of add a cherry on the top to add to that tumultuous journey, Paul ends up getting bitten by a viper. So after much tribulation, and by God's divine revelation, Paul in his company, they survive and they make it safely to Rome.

Which answers the question, how did we get to the point where Paul penned Ephesians? It was while Paul was in Rome, under house arrest, awaiting his trial, Paul sat down to write the book of Ephesians along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

To kind of make it a little personal here, remember the last time that the Apostle Paul talked to, right the leaders at Ephesus, the believers at Ephesus, remember they cried, and they shed a tear. And they were really hurt the most that they're not going to see Paul's face again. That was the last time he had contact with them. So after all that Paul had endured, he finally has an opportunity, not under not desirable circumstances, right, who wants to go to jail and go through what Paul went through? But Paul finally had an opportunity to sit down and write to the believers in Ephesus. And boy, did Paul have a lot to tell them!

So that's kind of, I know, that was kind of a drive through history, and I try not to get too bogged down. It's hard not to, but that's how in a nutshell, we got from The end of the closer john to the penning of the book of Ephesians, which we're about to study.

So now on to the latter part, what do we expect? Or what is Ephesians about and what can we expect and I want to give you an analogy. Here, have you heard of a national public Clearinghouse, were they called Publishing Clearinghouse, where you kind of enroll into this sweepstakes? And then, you know, you kind of go on about your life and then you get that knock on the door. And there is that person would like that million dollar check or \$10 million check. You're like, Oh, wow! I just won, you know, whatever it is, right, whatever that amount is. The Book of Ephesians is like that. It says if Paul knocked

on the door, and says look at your inheritance. This is Yours. The only difference is, the only difference is you didn't enroll into the sweepstakes. God enrolled you into that sweepstakes.

So, I'd like to call the book of Ephesians, the book of spiritual riches that we have in Christ. And Paul writes at length about every spiritual blessings believers have in Christ. That includes our election and predestination. That includes this unlimited forgiveness of our sins. That's a big one, obtaining eternal glory, eternal security and assurance of our salvation. Paul reminds them that when they were dead in trespasses and sins, but made in live in Christ, and that was done by God's grace through faith, and Paul tells them that believers were saved unto unto good work. That God also pre planned or predestined, that we should walk in them.

And not only that Paul reveals to them the mystery of the glorious gospel, namely, that Gentiles too, are part of God's redemptive plan. And that wasn't always clear in the Old Testament, but at the coming of Christ and further revelation by our New Testament authors, we know that that is to be true. And then Paul provides instruction on how we are to conduct ourselves whether it be conducting ourselves in the world or or in the church or in the family and in the household.

So as you can see, there is a lot to look forward to. So and I want to say this as it gets, it gets because of the book of Ephesians. It's very practical for us. If you're battling with depression, if you are lacking assurance, if you are in a spiritual funk, whatever that may be, If you feel useless, you don't feel that you have the worth. That you can't gauge yourself rightly you have a low view of yourself. Don't miss this study. Because when all is said and done and when we submit ourselves to receive the truth that has been clearly communicated no by the heart of Paul through the through the Holy Spirit, that we as believers, we have no excuse to be all that we can be that God and that God intended us to be so that we can be useful for his service. Oh, Heavenly Father, as we close in prayer. Lord, we are introduced to this marvelous book in such a way that it is. The Book of riches Oh Lord, the book of riches of our spiritual blessings and inheritance that we have in Christ. Lord, there's so much promises. There's so much that is ours, not just in the future, but right now in the present, that we simply need to seek it out in your word. And Lord, that's what we are going to endeavor to do today. And this day forward ias we go through your word to dig as it were to find treasure and Lord, as when we find that treasure, to receive that treasure of your marvelous truth and allow that to conform us into the image of Christ.

So Lord, I pray that as we are taking on this new adventure in the coming weeks, that your Holy Spirit would work in and through us even now, and until every moment where we encounter your living Word and that only you and your perfect timing and power and plan can cause it to bear fruit that will result in glory and honor to you. So, Lord, we look forward to hear the spiritual blessings that we possess in Christ in our upcoming studies. Until then, May Your will be done in our lives as it is in heaven. And we pray these things in Jesus name.

Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece 36:26

Thank you for listening to the Truth Matters Church podcast today. You know, when we read the Bible, it's very helpful to understand the context and historical aspect of the text. Ephesians is a rich book full of doctrine and going through the conversion in the ministry of its author, the apostle Paul really helps

us understand the framework for his letter to the church in Ephesus. We hope this message shines a light on this amazing part of Scripture for you and encourages you to dive deeper in your personal study of God's Word.

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