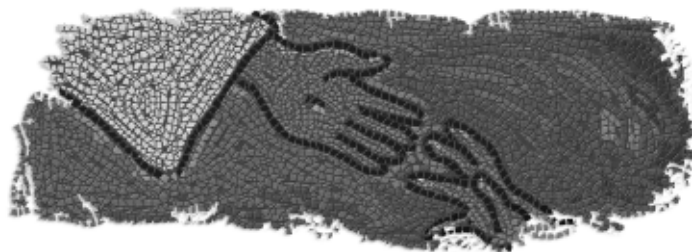


What God Has Done



SABBATH—OCTOBER 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Corinthians 2:7; Romans 8:15, 16; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8.

MEMORY VERSE: “We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Through his blood our sins have been forgiven. We have been set free because God’s grace is so rich” (Ephesians 1:7, NIV).

PRAISE AND PRAYER. In the original Greek language, Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence. In this sentence, Paul introduces major parts of Christian doctrine.¹ He writes about the idea that the Godhead² was involved in forming (making) the church. The church is God’s family on earth. God the Father “chose us to belong to Christ before the world was created” (Ephesians 1:4, NIV). We have redemption (salvation) in Christ “through His blood” (Ephesians 1:7, NKJV). The Holy Spirit gives us security (safety) and guarantees (promises) our eternal³ inheritance (gift) (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

Paul recognizes that God acts in history and time. But Paul also recognizes that God lives in “heavenly places.” The words “heavenly places” show up five times in Ephesians. (1) Our blessings come from heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). (2) The risen Christ is seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20). (3) We, too, will be seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). (4) God’s purposes will be made known in heavenly places through the church (Ephesians 3:10). (5) Powers of darkness began in heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What is predestination?⁴ What has God done for us in Christ? What does Paul mean by adoption? How has Christ redeemed (saved) us?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 15.

¹doctrine—church belief.

²Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

³eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

⁴predestination—the way God decided before Creation to save anyone who chooses to accept His salvation.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 9**THE CHOSEN (Ephesians 1:4).**

Read Ephesians 1:4, 5. These verses show the beginning of the church in God's mind. God's plan of salvation did not just happen. He made the plan before Creation. God developed a purpose in His mind. That purpose was for Him to choose us in Christ. Even before we lived, God saw us through a relationship⁵ with Christ. Because of that relationship, He could make us His children. We are not saved by anything we are or do. We cannot work our way to God. God already had planned our salvation before He created us. He planned for us to accept what Christ offers. God planning to save us before He created us is called predestination.

How do the following verses help us understand predestination? 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:4, 5; Ephesians 3:11; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 13:8.

Many people get confused over the truth that God planned and chose us to be saved before He created us. This is because this truth might suggest that He chose some people to be lost. But this is not what the Bible teaches. Instead, God's purpose is that everyone would be saved. Read 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Peter 3:9. God Himself decided this before the world

began. He did not decide ahead of time which of us would choose to be saved. God knew ahead of time that our eternal future is not the same as saying He already has decided that future. He offers us salvation because of what Christ has done for us. This is the plan God has worked out for us even before He created us.

God chose ahead of time that you should be saved. His plan for you is to be with Him forever in a new heaven and a new earth. Write a prayer of thanksgiving and praise for this wonderful plan. Share your prayer with your class on Sabbath.

MONDAY—OCTOBER 10**PRAISE GOD FOR ADOPTING US (Ephesians 1:4-6).**

What are the three things God does for us? Ephesians 1:4-6.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

⁵relationship—the connections we have with other people.

God already had the church in His mind when He developed the plan of salvation before He created the world. But who would create the church? Who would be in God's family? Paul already has given part of the answer in Ephesians 1:4. People in God's family would be those who were chosen in Christ to be "holy and without blame." They also are those who walk in love. This does not mean that God Himself has made choices. It just announces God's plan to offer salvation to the whole world. But He can make salvation work only for people who accept His salvation.

Salvation and eternal life are available to everyone as a gift of God in Jesus (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9). But only "anyone who believes in him [Jesus]" (NirV) shall be saved. God's gift of salvation is decided ahead of time for anyone. But receiving the gift depends on a person choosing to accept Jesus as his or her Savior and Lord.

Paul adds: For those who accept God's offer of salvation, "He decided long ago to adopt us as his children" (Ephesians 2:5, NirV). Again, it is not that God chose to save some and not others. Instead, those who have accepted what Christ has done for them are the ones who are saved.

Notice how the words "adoption" or "adopt" are used in Ephesians 1:5. Why would Paul use these words to describe what God has done for us? Read also Romans 8:15,16; Galatians 3:26-29; Galatians 4:5.

God's church is made up of adopted children. Natural children are orphans and wanderers—outside the family of God. This is because of their sin. They chose to rebel against God. But when they accept God's gift planned long ago, they are adopted into God's family. Their relationship to God now becomes a family relationship. This relationship is based on love.

Think of someone you love. What encourages your actions toward that person? How does that relationship help you better understand your relationship with your adopted Father (God)?

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 11

REDEMPTION (SALVATION) IN CHRIST (Ephesians 1:7, 8).

Through what do we have redemption? Ephesians 1:7, 8.



Our sins are forgiven through Jesus' blood.

Can any one of us be saved without blood? Hebrews 9:22. Explain your answer.

“Redemption” is a Greek word meaning freedom for a slave because someone paid to set that slave free. In the Bible, redemption means God’s plan through Christ to save us from the slavery of sin. The flowing of Christ’s blood on the cross for our sins can do two things: (1) it can forgive and remove sin, and (2) it can offer us redemption and adoption into God’s family (Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 1:7, 8). None of this would have been possible without Christ.

Forgiveness of sin is free for us. We cannot put a price on it or pay for it. But God’s forgiveness cost Him the blood of Jesus. Sin brings death. So if sinners were to be saved from death, someone needed to die for them. In the Old Testament sanctuary, God taught this through the animal sacrifices. The sacrifices pointed to the day when Christ, “the lamb of God,” would take away the world’s sins (John 1:29). Jesus died for us. His blood makes forgiveness of sins possible (Romans 5:8, 9; Ephesians 2:13; Colossians 1:20).

Our redemption and adoption are made possible because of Jesus’ sacrifice. “We have been set free because God’s grace is so rich” (Ephesians 1:7, NIV). Paul uses the word “riches” (or “rich”) six times in

Ephesians (Ephesians 1:7, 18; Ephesians 2:4, 7; Ephesians 3:8, 16). We may be poor in many ways. But we are very rich in God’s grace. We are free from the guilt of sin.

Someone asked a wealthy businessman how much more would satisfy him. “Always a little more,” the multimillionaire answered. But ask a Christian the same question and the answer will be: “My God will meet all your needs. He will meet them in keeping with his wonderful riches that come to you because you belong to Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NIV).

“Grace is unearned favor. The believer is made righteous (holy) without any work on his own. He has no claim to offer to God. He is made righteous through the payment that Jesus Christ has made on the cross for him. Jesus is now standing in the courts of heaven as the sinner’s substitute.”⁶—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 398. Memorize this quote. It will be very helpful when you feel discouraged or in doubt about your salvation.

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 12

THE MYSTERY (Ephesians 1:9-12).

How many times in Ephesians 1:9-12 does Paul say that God’s

⁶substitute—someone who takes another person’s place. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

will or purpose is being fulfilled? Add to that the number of times Paul talks about God's will being fulfilled in Ephesians 1:1-8. How does the idea of God's purposes being fulfilled for us help you trust God?

God's people can praise Him for election,⁷ adoption, redemption, forgiveness, and acceptance. Today's lesson adds one more reason to praise God: the mystery of His salvation plan (Ephesians 1:9).



Praise God for His salvation.

Paul uses the word “mystery” six times in Ephesians. The Greek word for mystery has two meanings. First, a mystery is something secret and known only to a chosen few. Second, a mystery is something that was hidden but is now shown by God. The second meaning is what Paul uses.

What is this “mystery” of God's salvation plan? Ephesians 1:9-12.

Ephesians 3 shows God's plan to bring Jews and Gentiles⁸ into one fellowship. God wanted to create a united church. But there is another part to this mystery. Christ has brought Jews and Gentiles into one group through the Cross. This is an example of “the secret plan he [God] had already decided to complete by means of Christ. This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head” (Ephesians 1:9, 10, TEV). God sent His Son at just the right time to unite Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 4:4). So He has a plan to unite all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10) at just the right time. Uniting all things in Christ will happen when Christ returns.

“This is God's purpose—to restore⁹ a lost unity. This unity must be in Christ, because He is the center of all things. . . . The unity of God's universe had been broken by sin. The mystery of God's will was His plan to restore this unity when the time was right. This restoration¹⁰ is to be done through Christ. That mystery will be fulfilled at the close of the great controversy.¹¹ Then all things in heaven

⁷ election—God's pre-decision to call and choose us as His people.

⁸ Gentiles—people who are not Jews.

⁹ restore—to make something as it was before sin entered the world.

¹⁰ restoration—the return of something to what it was before sin entered the world.

¹¹ the great controversy—the war between Jesus and Satan over good and evil.

and on earth will be united in Christ, and the character of the Godhead¹² will have been proven just (fair).”—Adapted from *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1000.

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 13

JEWS AND GENTILES (Ephesians 1:11-14).

Paul offers an example of the new unity Christ brings between Jews and Gentiles in Ephesians 1:11-14. He uses the words “we” and “you.” “We were also chosen to belong to him” (Ephesians 1:11, NIV). “We were the first to put our hope in Christ” (Ephesians 1:12, NIV). “You also became believers in Christ” (Ephesians 1:13, NKJV). The “we” means Jewish Christians. Paul counts himself as a Jewish Christian. “You” means Gentile Christians.

Why were Jews first? God chose them first to be His people (Deuteronomy 4:20; Deuteronomy 9:29; Zechariah 2:12). To the Jews were given “the very [actual, exact] words of God” (Romans 3:2, NIV). The gospel was preached first to the Jews (Romans 1:16). So the first to believe in the gospel were the Jews (John 1:11; John 8:31; Acts 1:8; Acts 3:26).

Paul says the Jews were the first. But he does not mean the Jewish Christians were better. Paul says in Ephesians 1:13, “You [the Gentile

Christians] also trusted” (NKJV), and the Holy Spirit has become the guarantee (promise) of “our [the Jews’ and Gentiles’] inheritance [gift]” (Ephesians 1:14, NKJV).

Knowing or accepting Christ before someone else accepts Him does not give anyone any special treatment. The point is not when we accept the gospel. Instead, it is whether we remain true to the gospel.

Paul supports the idea that the Holy Spirit guarantees to us the promise of God’s salvation. Paul then makes three points about the Holy Spirit: (1) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of promise. God promised the Holy Spirit through Jesus to everyone who repents¹³ and believes (Luke 24:49; Galatians 3:14, 16). (2) The Holy Spirit is God’s seal. A seal is a sign of ownership. God makes the Holy Spirit live within us as a sign we belong to God (Romans 8:14-17; 2 Corinthians 1:22). (3) The Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee (Ephesians 1:14, KJV). The word “guarantee” means “a deposit” or “a pledge (promise).” Through the Holy Spirit, God has made a deposit or a pledge that He will fulfill all His promises to both Jews and Gentiles.

The *experience* of salvation is different for each person. But Ephesians 1:13, 14 teach three basic steps to salvation. What are these parts? How have you personally experienced these parts?

¹²the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.

¹³repents—when people say they are sorry for their sins and want to turn away from their sins.

How has your experience been different from other people's experience? What can you do or change to make your experience richer?

**HEARING THE TRUTH
 BELIEVING THE TRUTH
 + RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT**

SALVATION

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 14

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Before the world was created” (Ephesians 1:4): “The plan for our redemption (salvation) was not decided at the last minute. It was not a plan made after the fall of Adam. The plan was an example of ‘the mystery that was hidden for a very long time.’ Romans 16:25, NIrV. The plan showed the principles¹⁴ that have been the foundation (basis) of God’s throne from eternity.¹⁵ . . . God did not command that sin should appear. But He saw that sin would appear. He took steps to meet this terrible emergency. So great was God’s love for the world, that He promised to give “ ‘His one

and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.’ (John 3:16, NIrV).”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.



God gave His only Son to us.

God's predestination: “In the courts of heaven, God developed a plan that men as sinners should not die in their disobedience. Instead, through faith in Christ as their Substitute, they might become the chosen of God. God planned for them to be adopted as children of Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of God’s will. God’s will is that all men should be saved. . . . But those who die will die because they refuse to be adopted as

¹⁴principles—general laws that help make specific laws. Some of God’s principles are love and justice (fairness).

¹⁵eternity—life without end; forever.

children of God through Christ Jesus.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1114.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have people read to the class the prayers of thanksgiving and praise they wrote for Sunday’s lesson. What can you learn from these prayers?
2. Imagine what it must be like to be an orphan adopted into a loving, caring family that loves that orphan as much as it would a natural family member. How does imagining that help you understand God’s love for you? How does it help you understand how you should treat your brothers and sisters in the Lord?
3. Discuss what you can do as a class to help someone in your church (a new member, someone really discouraged, or a young person) understand what it means to be part of God’s family.