

Commentary on Ephesians Chapter 1:3-12

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Does Ephesians 1 say that believers in Christ were chosen before the foundation of the world? Many Christians believe this, so let's take a look and see.

In Ephesians 1:3-12, Paul speaks of the Jews, not Christians in general. It was the Jews who were chosen before the foundation of the world. Let's look at what Paul himself has to say:

Ephesians 1:3-14 (KJV) *3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed **us** with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4According as he hath chosen **us** in him before the foundation of the world, that **we** should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5Having predestinated **us** unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made **us** accepted in the beloved. 7In whom **we** have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8Wherein he hath abounded toward **us** in all wisdom and prudence; 9Having made known unto **us** the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11In whom also **we** have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12That **we** should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13In whom **ye** also trusted, after that **ye** heard the word of truth, the gospel of **your** salvation: in whom also after that **ye** believed, **ye** were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Notice Paul's use of first and second person personal plural pronouns. Paul is making a distinction between two different groups here; notice of one group, he says "we", "our", and "us". Of the other group, he says "you" and "your". Paul includes himself in the first group: the we/our/us group. Then he says to the Ephesians, "And you, after you heard the gospel" - the Ephesians are the second group. So, who is the first group, the group Paul includes himself in? They were chosen before the foundation of the world, predestined to adoption, were to be to the praise of His glory, and had received an inheritance. These are references to the Jews. So, the we/our/us group is the Jews, and the you/your group is the Gentiles.

Ephesians 1:1-14 (KJV)

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we proceed, notice all of the verbs are in the past tense, except one:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Let's break these terms down:

"Blessed"

This is a Hebraism; "blessed" is a Hebrew praise. The Hebrew word is "Bawrak", meaning praise.

As an example:

Bawrak Adonai = Praise Adonai

Paul's using this Hebrew praise suggests that he had a common bond with the leadership of the Church at Ephesus, indicating that they were likely Jewish.

This praise is found throughout the OT. One example can be found in Genesis 9:

Genesis 9:26 (KJV)

*And he said, **Blessed** be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.*

Peter wrote his first Epistle to Jewish Christians of the Diaspora. Peter opens his Epistle this way:

1 Peter 1:1-5 (KJV)

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy **hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Peter starts his Epistle just as Paul did: with praise to God. He speaks of the election of Israel, then he says "Blessed be God". Notice Peter says He has begotten us again. The nation of Israel was adopted in the OT. God called Israel His son, however they broke the covenant so they had to be adopted again.

"Heavenly"

This is an adjective, is in the neuter gender, and refers to heavenly things, not places.

So, what heavenly things has Israel been blessed with?

Deuteronomy 28:1-8 (KJV)

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and **blessed** shalt thou be in the field.

Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.

Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and **blessed** shalt thou be when thou goest out.

The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

*The LORD shall command the **blessing** upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

"In Christ"

The Law is Spiritual. Who gave the Law to Moses? Jesus. Jesus was involved with the Law from the very beginning. He was in the burning bush. When Moses asked, "Who shall I say sent me?", Jesus said, "I am."

Exodus 3:14 (KJV)

*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM hath sent me** unto you.*

We know this was Jesus because when He was challenged by the Pharisee in the Book of John, He said,

John 8:56-58 (KJV)

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I am.***

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

God chose Israel to be holy and blameless before Him.

Exodus 19:3-6 (KJV)

And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 (KJV)

*For thou art an **holy people** unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath **chosen thee** to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.*

*The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor **choose you**, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:*

But because the LORD, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

These above refer to the Exodus, God choosing them and bringing them out

of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 14:1-2 (KJV)

Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

*For thou art an **holy people** unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath **chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.***

Deuteronomy 26:16-19 (KJV)

This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:

*And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; And **to make thee high above all nations** which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and **that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God**, as he hath spoken.*

Continued:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Predestined means predetermined. God called Israel to be an holy, separated people. His predetermined plan was to save them through adoption:

Romans 9:1-5 (KJV)

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Galatians 4:4-5 (KJV)

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

"Made us accepted" is not a good translation; translated, the word "made us accepted" is as follows:

G5487 **χαριτόω charitoō** Thayer Definition: 1) to make graceful 1a) charming, lovely, agreeable 2) to peruse with grace, compass with favour 3) to honour with blessings

- *Thayer's Greek Definitions*

And it only appears twice in the NT, here and in Luke 1:28:

Luke 1:28 (KJV)

*And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art **highly favoured**, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

"Highly favoured" is the better translation.

It could read "He made us favoured above all" or "He made us highly favoured".

"In the Beloved"

"Beloved" is a participle, and it is in the perfect tense. This means it is an action completed in the past with results continuing to the present. Translated literally, it means "the one having been loved".

Septuagint Deuteronomy 32:15

*15 So Jacob ate and was filled, and **the beloved one** kicked; he grew fat, he became thick and broad: then he forsook the God that made him, and departed from God his Saviour.*

Septuagint Deuteronomy, 33:1-5

33:1 And this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the

children of Israel before his death. 2 And he said, The Lord is come from Sina, and has appeared from Seir to us, and has hasted out of the mount of Pharan, with the ten thousands of Cades; on his right hand were his angels with him. 3 And he spared his people, and all his sanctified ones are under thy hands; and they are under thee; and he received of his words 4 the law which Moses charged us, an inheritance to the assemblies of Jacob. 5 And he shall be prince with **the beloved one**, when the princes of the people are gathered together with the tribes of Israel.

God loved Israel. He brought them out of Egypt and blessed them, yet they turned on Him.

Septuagint Dueteronomy 33:26-29

26 There is not any such as the God of **the beloved**; he who rides upon the heaven is thy helper, and the magnificent One of the firmament. 27 And the rule of God shall protect thee, and that under the strength of the everlasting arms; and he shall cast forth the enemy from before thy face, saying, Perish. 28 And Israel shall dwell in confidence alone on the land of Jacob, with corn and wine; and the sky shall be misty with dew upon thee. 29 **Blessed art thou, O Israel; who is like to thee, O people saved by the Lord?** thy helper shall hold his shield over thee, and his sword is thy boast; and thine enemies shall speak falsely to thee, and thou shalt tread upon their neck.

Septuagint Isaiah 44:1-2

44:1 But now hear, Jacob my servant; **and Israel, whom I have chosen**. 2 Thus saith the Lord God that made thee, and he that formed thee from the womb; Thou shalt yet be helped: fear not, my servant Jacob; **and beloved Israel, whom I have chosen**.

Jeremiah 11:14-15 (KJV) 14Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. 15What hath **my beloved** to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.

Jeremiah 12:7 (KJV) 7I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given **the dearly beloved** of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

This is the only verse that has a present tense verb. He is speaking of himself and the believing Jews.

Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Who did God abound toward in all wisdom?

John 16:12-13 (KJV)

*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, **the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:** for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.*

Galatians 1:10-12 (KJV)

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:1-5 (KJV)

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, **as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets** by the Spirit;

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

The mystery of His will speaks of the word of God. Paul says,

Romans 3:1-2 (KJV)

*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, **because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.***

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and

which are on earth; even in him:

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Paul says they have "obtained" an inheritance, yet further down in verse 14, he says the Gentiles have received the "earnest" of their inheritance. The inheritance is the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Israel did inherit the land, however they could not keep it because they did not obey the Law.

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

The literal translation of the Greek phrase "first trusted" is "before hoped". It was Israel who "before hoped" in the Christ. They had prophet after prophet prophesying the coming of the Christ.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Here, Paul tells us that some of these promises pertain to the Gentiles when he says "and you **after** you believed."

Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Here, Paul tells us that the Ephesians have received the earnest, or down payment, of their inheritance - unlike the Jews, who had received their inheritance.

Ephesians 1:15-20 (KJV)

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

Paul goes on in the rest of the chapter to tell them that his prayer is that God would enlighten them and give them understanding. He wants them to understand all of the blessings he has just spoken of regarding what God had done for Israel.

Another way we know that Paul is addressing the Jews in verses 3-12 is the distinction he makes between the Jew and Gentile in chapter 2. In his opening of the letter, he greets the church with these words.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: (Eph. 1:1 KJV)

Notice the two groups here in Paul's greeting. We have the saints and the faithful. The saints here are the Jews. This can be seen by Paul's words in chapter 2:

¹¹ *Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

¹² *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (Eph. 2:11-12 KJV)*

Here, Paul tells us that the "you/your" group is the Gentiles. He says, "Remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh". Then he goes on to say that they were, without Christ, aliens from Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, without hope and without God. Clearly, that was the Gentiles and not the Jews. He calls the Gentiles the "Uncircumcision" and the Jews the "Circumcision", showing a distinction between the two groups.

¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:13 KJV)*

Here he says, "you, who were far off have been brought near". Once again, the "you" is the Gentiles.

¹⁶ *And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:¹*

¹⁷ *And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

¹⁸ *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

(Eph. 2:16-18 KJV)

Here, he talks about both groups being reconciled into one body. Again, two groups: those who were far off, the Gentiles, and those who were near, the Jews.

¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (Eph. 2:19 KJV)

And finally, he says the "you/your" group, which is the Gentiles, are no longer strangers and foreigners. They are now fellow citizens with the saints, the Jews.

Finally, we have evidence from the Early Church, Tertullian quotes this passage while refuting Marcione:

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 3

Again, what Christ do the following words announce, when the apostle says: "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ?" (Ephesians 1:12) **Now who could have first trusted i.e., previously trusted in God, before His advent, except the Jews to whom Christ was previously announced, from the beginning?** He who was thus foretold, was also foretrusted. **Hence the apostle refers the statement to himself, that is, to the Jews, in order that he may draw a distinction with respect to the Gentiles,** (when he goes on to say, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel (of your salvation); in whom ye believed, and were sealed with His Holy Spirit of promise." (Ephesians 1:13) Of what promise? That which was made through Joel: "In the last days will I pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh," (Joel 2:28) that is, on all nations. Therefore the Spirit and the Gospel will be found in the Christ, who was foretrusted, because foretold.