

OUR RICHES IN CHRIST

Summary and Historical Background

Ephesus was the leading city of Asia Minor in Paul's time. Though Pergamum was the official capitol, Ephesus was the first port of call for every Roman governor who entered the province of Asia. Mithridates ordered the massacre of Romans from Ephesus. Marc Antony spent much of his time at Ephesus. The city was also an important commercial center. It was the most accessible city in all Asia, with a large harbor capable of holding the largest ships, and with many highways ending there, including the western end of the overland route to the Euphrates. Food (wine, figs, olive oil, oysters), wool and manufactured goods (especially textiles) were shipped from Ephesus to all parts of the Roman Empire. The temple of Diana (or Artemis) served as a bank - the most secure in all Asia. It was as important in commerce as some of our national banks are today.

The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Not without reason did Demetrius say that all Asia and the world worshipped there (Acts 19:38). Alexander the Great had offered to rebuild it; Roman emperors graced it with gifts; Roman Emperors drafted wills and gave gifts in the name of Artemis as the overseer and witness to the document. Associated with the temple were two of the darker aspects of paganism: magic and religious prostitution. Its magic included astrology, sorcery, incantations, amulets, exorcisms, in fact, every form of magical deception. Forms of magic were so common in Ephesus that when new believers destroyed their magical books (actually magical devices), it amounted to 50,000 denarii and each denarius was worth one day's wage (Acts. 19:19). Furthermore, its religious prostitution was represented by a grotesque (many-breasted) statue of Artemis, a representation of fertility.

In the darkness of this great political, commercial, and religious center, Paul had built a strong church at Ephesus. Later, when he wrote a letter to the church at Ephesus from his house-prison in Rome, he wrote out of a heart full of wonder, worship and thanksgiving. This letter has much in common with the one sent to Colosse because they were written at the same time.

Introduction: God has not only saved the one who puts his faith in Jesus Christ, but He has also made him exceedingly rich in spiritual blessings.

Lesson Aim To praise the Lord for the amazing spiritual blessings He has given to believers:

Memory Verse: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

Outline of the Lesson and Questions to Answer:

I. Our Blessings in Christ — 1:3-14

1. Why does Paul bless (praise) God? 1:3
2. Put the believer's blessings by the verse(s) where they are found in the text. Here is a list of them: inheritance, redemption/forgiveness, sealed, informed, chosen, earnest payment made, accepted or favored, adopted.

1:4 -

1:8-10 -

1:5 -

1:11 -

1:6 -

1:13 -

1:7 -

1:14 -

3. When were believers chosen (predestinated)? 1:4

4. How were believers chosen by God? Rom 8:29; 1 Pet 1:2

5. Why were believers chosen (predestined) by God? 1:4; Rom 8:29
6. What blessing did the believers receive when God predestined them? 1:5
7. What has made believers accepted or favored in the Beloved (Christ)? 1:6
8. Name two spiritual blessings that Christ gives to believers. 1:7
9. What will happen on earth in the dispensation of the fullness of times? 1:10
10. What does Christ give to the believer? 1:11; Rom 8:16-17
11. What security does the Holy Spirit give to believers? 1:13-14
12. What should believers do as a result of these blessings? 1:6, 12, 14

II. Paul's Prayer for Christians — 1:15-23

13. What stirred Paul to pray for the Ephesian believers? 1:15
14. What is the first request that Paul makes for the believers? 1:17
15. What three things does Paul pray for the Ephesian believers to know? 1:18-19a
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
16. What kind of power is available to believers? 1:19-20
17. What else was done by the power that raised Jesus from the dead? 1:20-22
18. What is the body of Christ? 1:23

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