Ephesians*

Ephesians 1:3-7 (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
(4) 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:
(5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
(6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.
(7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;
Against the backdrop of the Roman idol Diana (see Ancient Empires - Rome), also known to the pagan Greeks as Artemis (see Ancient Empires-Greece), came Paul preaching the gospel of Christ. Her cult is mentioned in the Bible, where some translations call it "Diana of the Ephesians" while others use "Artemis of the Ephesians." The city was famed for the Temple of Diana who had her chief shrine there, also the Library of Celsus , and its theater, which was capable of holding 25,000 spectators. This open-air theater was used initially for drama, but during later Roman times gladiatorial combats were also held on its stage, with the first archaeological evidence of a gladiator graveyard found in May 2007. The population of Ephesus also had several major bath complexes, built at various points while the city was under Roman rule. The city had one of the most advanced aqueduct systems in the ancient world, with multiple aqueducts of various sizes to supply different areas of the city, including 4 major aqueducts. The ruins at Ephesus are still very impressive. Among its greatest structures was "the temple of the idol goddess Diana", which was considered one of the

seven wonders of the ancient world. The remains of this temple have been excavated, as have those of the "theater" where the great riot against Paul took place. Paul was no stranger to controversy. The cult of Diana was so powerful and widespread, religiously and economically in the first century, that it proposed a monstrous environment in some places for those who preached the Gospel of Christ, as the apostle Paul found out during his third missionary journey recorded by Luke in;

Acts 19:24-28 (24) For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;
(25) Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.
(26) Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:
(27) So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.
(28) And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

Ephesus was the capital and chief city of the Roman province of Asia, located on the west coast of Asia Minor, almost due east of Athens. So far as the record goes, Paul spent almost three years in Ephesus, longer than any other place after he started his missionary ministries. A strong church was established there, and Timothy was persuaded by Paul to stay and continue the work (1Timothy 1:1-4).

With such a long time spent by Paul establishing the church at Ephesus, it is noteworthy that, unlike his other epistles, the book of Ephesians contains no references to any individuals

there, nor any references to specific problems or situations in the Ephesian church. The Ephesian epistle thus seems clearly designed for use in any congregation, and the probability is that Paul meant it as a circular letter, to be shared with all the Churches of Christ in Asia and elsewhere. It was probably written while Paul was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28), and is implied by the fact that Paul made several allusions to his imprisonment in the Ephesian epistle (Eph 3:1, 4:1). Of all of St. Paul's Epistles, the Letter to the Ephesians in the estimation of many, is Paul's crowning work. It is both a literary gem and a treasure of spiritual nuggets. Those who study it may not fully plumb its depths, but should glean an important understanding concerning the oneness of faith in Christ, of His doctrine, of His Church and grasp the subtle hints of salvation, provided mental frankness and honesty are applied by the student, turn to;

Ephesians 4:1-6 (1) I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

(2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

(3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

(4) There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

(5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

(6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Having read these few verses it should not be difficult understanding oneness in the purpose of God, and while many have contemplated the one baptism and have put forth various answers, some seemingly magical, there is an answer. There was one baptism which Paul was subjected to for remission of sins, listen to this; And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the

Lord (Acts 22:16). *Born of the water and of the spirit is the one baptism in which there is salvation* (John 3:5). *While on earth Jesus commanded His Apostles;* Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (Matt 28:19). *This the Apostles did and it is the only baptism which a man can administer to another, therefore qualifing as the "one baptism." A man cannot administer baptism of the Holy Ghost, or the baptism of fire and John's baptism has served its purpose. The baptism commanded by Jesus is the one baptism for the world,* he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). *These words were spoken by promise and the fulfillment of His words began in the Acts of the Apostles. And that is how we in these latter days became recipients of the gift of grace by faith in Christ; turn to;*

Acts 19:3-5 (3) And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
(4) Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.
(5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

My brethren, here is an example of the one baptism. Christian baptism ordained by Jesus is administered in the name of the Spirit, as well as in the name of the Father and of the Son for the remission of sins. John's baptism does not qualify for remission of sin and was for the nation of Israel. Thus we can regard Cornelius as literally the first-fruits of the Gentiles. The step taken by Peter was therefore one of tremendous importance to the whole development of the church. The significance of the incident consists exactly in this, that under Divine direction, the first Gentile, not at all belonging to the old theocracy, becomes a Spirit-filled baptized believer, entering through the front door of the Church of Christ without first going through the back door of

Judaism. The incident settled forever the great, fundamental question as to the relations of Jew and Gentile in the Church, go to;
Ephesians 2:11-16 (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:
(13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
(14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;
(15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;
(16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:
Of course, this incident of Cornelius was only the first step in a long development; but the principle was forever settled. By this tremendous innovation it was settled that Christianity was to be maintained independently from the swaddling bands of Judaism and that the Church of Christ was not to be an appendix to the synagogue. The rest came in due time and proper order, in agreement with the prayer spoken by Jesus before He was crucified; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Though Ephesians was written from prison in Rome, the first half of the letter is full of praise and worship, an exalted understanding of Christ, and a transcendent view of the Church. He challenges us to leave our lowest selves and inspires us to seek our highest potential in Jesus, seated with him at the right hand of the Father. Here is salvation by

grace through faith, as well as the unity and mission of the church. In the gospels God had emphasized His salvation by grace when He said; This is my beloved Son, hear him (Luke 9:35). *Grace is a gift of God which cannot be overstated. Paul mentions grace twelve times in the book of Ephesians alone. A sampling is;*

Ephesians 2:1-5 (1) And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
(2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
(3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
(4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
(5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

The Ephesian letter doesn't directly address problems in that church as do some other letters. In a since it reminds me of the minor prophet Joel. Apparently the people to whom Joel spoke had not sunk into a deep moral decay that sometimes characterized the nation of Israel. What Joel saw when he looked at his society was complacency, not corruption. The peoples eyes were no longer upon the Lord but on themselves. Could this have happened to the Church at Ephesus and could this happen to us? According to the early church fathers, the Apostle John served as senior pastor of the Ephesian church in his later years, while he wrote his five New Testament books. In his book of Revelation, Ephesus was evidently noted as the leading church among the seven churches which are in Asia, but something was not quite right, lets turn to;

Revelation 2:1-7 (1) Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his

right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;
(2) I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:
(3) And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.
(4) Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
(5) Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.
(6) But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
(7) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.
The evidence is abundant the Church at Ephesus was an active Church. However, it had left it's first love. Could this be a clue of complacency? Something that Christians today should avoid? Complacency seems to be an evil that has dogged the human race from old, listen to Jesus in;
Luke 17:26-27 (26) And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.
(27) They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.
This doesn't sound so bad, so why were they taken away? Could it be they had left the love of God?, could they have become complacent because of their own wants and desires. Is it possible that the people of Noah's day, the Church at Ephesus and perhaps even we today are complacent? Notwithstanding, the Old Testament Scriptures should be

studied to grasp a complete picture of the problems in Noah's day. Now the Old Testament scriptures were completed with the prophet Malachi, and now the New Testament Scriptures would be completed through the apostles and prophets in these latter days, the Apostle John being the last. God's love toward us has not wained, turn with me to;
Ephesians 3:1-6 (1) For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
(2) If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
(3) How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
(4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
(5) 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;
(6) That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
The Apostle John had been allowed to live to a very old age, in effect as it was said of Jesus, to tarry till I come (John 21:22). *And now Jesus had come unto John,* to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done (Revelation 22:6).
The fulfillment of these symbols would begin soon, to bring to completion God's great plan of the ages, it's finality, turn to;
Revelation 22:14-17 (14) Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.
(15) For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
(16) I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.
(17) And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that

heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
In the context of doing His will, there is another spiritual nugget in Paul's letter to the Ephesians of importance, music. Are you listening?; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (Eph 5:19). *It should be noted that a prolonged public dispute concerning opinions about music exist, that was not the case in the first few centuries in the Church. Some* Historical Information: There is not a solitary reference to the use of instrumental music in the worship of any New Testament church during the entirety of the apostolic age. The first appearance of instrumental music in church worship was about the sixth century A.D. The exact date of its introduction varied in different localities; but it can safely be concluded that there was no general practicing of it until after the eighth century.
(She worships in song by James M. Tolle)
Chambers Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, page 112, says: "The organ is said to have been introduced into church music by Pope Vitalian in 666 A.D."
Ephesians is also known for instructions to the married.
Ephesians 5:22-33 (22) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
(23) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
(24) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.
(25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
(26) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
(27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
(28) So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He

that loveth his wife loveth himself.
(29) For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
(30) For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
(31) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
(32) This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
(33) Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.
Oh! The joy and the sadness of a marriage relationship. It would be only joy if mankind were to follow the advise given in Ephesians. However, Paul says; but I speak concerning Christ and the church. *When our old man is crucified with Christ, that person departs his,* father the devil (John 8:44), and *is added to the Church and joined unto Christ. This is allowed by faith. What faith? Faith in Christ that is the effect of belief in the gospel, and repentance, confession and baptism that is the effect of faith; only those who first believe the testimony of God, by faith repent of their sins which is a turning away from, confession of faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and are baptized into His death for remission of sins, have the full and explicit testimony of pardon. This is the gospel. It's invitation is always open, also prayer requests for other reasons, in either case come while we persuade with song.*

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