

Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.  
Interim President  
Executive Vice President & Provost  
Criswell College

## A Theological Roadmap of the Letter to the Ephesians

### Introduction

It is always helpful to consult a map before embarking on a journey. Such an exercise is a preventative measure that may be a welcome defense against getting lost when the landscape changes. A brief overview of the theological ideas of the Book of Ephesians will help us to understand that the messages of the book are not random thoughts but concepts important for new believers and young churches. Ephesians is a theological treatise. It is not the same magnitude as Romans, but it ranks a close second (see introduction in *The Believer's Study Bible*, p. 1674). The following presents a theological map of Ephesians:

1. **The Triune Nature of God.** The opening chapter has many ideas but there is an organized purpose. Chapter 1:1-14 presents wonderful aspects of the characteristics of the triune nature of God. In this first section falls into three parts each of which present God the Father (1:1-6), God the Son (1:7-12), and God the Holy Spirit (1:13-14).
  - **God the Father** - Reference to God as "Father" appears a total of forty times in all the letters of Paul. In all the other letters it appears just four times in Romans, Galatians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians; three times in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and 2 Thessalonians; two times in 1 Timothy; one time in Philemon and Titus. By contrast the Fatherhood of God appears eight times in Ephesians (1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 3:14-15; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23).
  - **Jesus the Messiah** - "Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus" appears eighteen times in Ephesians, and the name "Christ," appears thirty-six times. Jesus is presented as the Messiah who is the Son of God, who is God but who is also distinct from God. Jesus blesses us from heaven, 1:3; chose us, 1:4; predestined us to adoption, 1:5; imparted faith, 1:15; gave us wisdom and revelation, 1:17; He accomplished God's eternal purpose, 3:11; He provides unity for all believers, 4:5; He is our intercessor, 5:20; He is our source of peace and grace, 6:23-34. Jesus died for us on the cross, 2:13, 16; 5:2, 25). He was raised from the dead, 1:20. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, 1:20; 4:8. He gives gifted people to the church, 4:8-11. He gives hope to believers, 1:12; 2:12.

- **The Holy Spirit** - The Holy Spirit or "Spirit" is mentioned fourteen times. This is more than in any other of Paul's writings. He is presented as the promised Holy Spirit, 1:13. He is the basis for unity in the church, 4:3-6. He is distinct from the Father and Son and acts as the guarantor of our redemption, 1:13-14. Through the Holy Spirit believers are filled with the power of God, 3:16-20; 5:18. Believers are to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, 2:18; 6:18.
2. **Prayer for Wisdom** - The place of prayer is important in understanding the deep things of God, 1:15-23. We need the help of the Holy Spirit, Jn 16:5-15.
  3. **Salvation by Grace** - Paul makes it crystal clear that salvation is an act of grace, not of works, 2:1-22. Salvation is an act of grace through Jesus, 2:1-10. Salvation was purchased through His blood, 2:11-13. Salvation produces peace and unity in the life of a believer, 2:14-18. Salvation fixes Christ as the Cornerstone of the "household of God," 2:19-22.
  4. **Doctrine of the Mystery of the Church** - The Greek word *mustarion* is used six times in Ephesians. It refers to the will of God in 1:9, the revelation of God to Paul, 3:3; the incarnation of the Messiah, 3:4, the mystery of Jesus' role in creation, 3:9, the church as the body of Christ, 5:32, cf. Col 1:24-27, and the mystery of the message of the church, the gospel, 6:19. The doctrine of the Mystery of the church as the body of Christ is presented in 3:1-21. We have the revelation of the mystery in 3:1-7, the purpose of the mystery in 3:8-13, and the basis for thanks to God, in 3:14-21.
  5. **Practical Theology: the Believer's Walk, 4:1-6:24.**
    - Walk in Unity of the Body, 4:1-6
    - Walk with Spiritual Gifts, 4:7-16
    - Walk as a New Creation, 4:17-24
    - Walk in Obedience of Holy Spirit, 4:25-32
    - Walk in Love, 5:1-7
    - Walk in Light, 5:8-14
    - Walk in Wisdom, 5:15-21
    - Walking Relationships, 5:22-6:9, 21-24
    - Walk in Full Armor, 6:10-20