

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 265 – September 22nd – Ephesians 1:1-23

Authorship, Intended readership and relationship with Colossians

The majority of contemporary New Testament scholars reject the Pauline authorship of Ephesians on the grounds that:

- i) The letter is written in an impersonal manner, hardly reflecting the relationship Paul enjoyed with the Christians at Ephesus.
- ii) The letter is clearly related to that to the Colossians. The author of Ephesians, it is argued, imitated Paul's letter to the Colossians.
- ii) Some of the theological emphases in Ephesians are different from those in other Pauline letters:
 - an emphasis upon Christ's exaltation rather than his death;
 - an emphasis upon salvation rather than justification;
 - a distinctive ecclesiology;
 - a realised eschatology.

In addition, it is argued that pseudonymity was common in first century literature¹.

All of these points are dealt with in detail by O'Brian in the introduction to his commentary on this Epistle in which he defends Pauline authorship. It is not my intention to go over the same ground in my brief introduction to this letter. Suffice it to say that the author of this letter demonstrates a profound understanding of the gospel and of Pauline theology such that, if the author were not Paul it would have to be someone else of similar stature. It is difficult to imagine that such a 'second Paul' would have escaped the notice of the early church which uniformly attributed this letter to Paul himself.

Why then is the letter so impersonal in style? A clue is perhaps provided in Ephesians 1:1 in which the phrase ἐν Ἐφέσῳ is omitted from a number of ancient manuscripts and citations (see notes in situ). This omission has led to the suggestion that the letter may have been produced originally as a general letter, intended for a number of churches in Asia Minor, the phrase ἐν Ἐφέσῳ being later inserted into the copy sent to or retained by that city. Acts 19:10 tells us that as a result of Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." It is not unreasonable then to suppose that Paul, now in prison, wrote to encourage these scattered churches of Asia Minor, the fruit of his ministry in Ephesus, and that, Ephesus, the epicentre of this ministry was subsequently considered the primary recipient of the letter.

If 'Ephesians' is a letter written to the churches founded through Paul's Ephesian ministry it is hardly surprising that the letter to the Colossians is so similar in structure and content. It is sufficient to note that the church at Colossae was one of the churches formed at this period and that Paul's letter to this church is therefore a particularised form of the general epistle. In these notes we take no particular view on the priority of Ephesians or Colossians: whether Paul first wrote the specific letters to Colossians and Laodiceans before penning the more general letter we know as Ephesians or vice versa is impossible to determine² and of little practical relevance. It is our contention, however, that both Ephesians and Colossians were

¹ On this issue, see particularly Earle E. Ellis, "Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents", *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honour of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. M.J. Wilkins and T. Paige, Sheffield, Academic Press, 1992.

² See particularly Ernest Best, "Who used Whom?: The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians", *New Testament Studies*, 43, 1997

written by the apostle Paul at much the same time during his imprisonment at Rome, in about 61-62 AD, and that they were intended for a similar readership³.

The Message of Ephesians

The central message of Ephesians is that Christ's work involves the reconciliation of all things to God (Eph 1:9-10). This reconciliation flows from the cross and is displayed in the church where the barrier between Jew and Gentile has been broken down (Eph 2:14-16). In the church, God's new-creation has appeared, a new creation which reflects his glory (Eph 1:18-19; 3:20-21), sharing the exalted glory of the risen Christ (Eph 2:6). The church is "God's pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future" (F.F.Bruce). But not all things are yet subject to God through Christ. There are still powers both heavenly and earthly which are opposed to him – powers which still hold men and women captive (Eph 2:4-7). Christ has won a decisive victory at the cross but these 'powers' continue to wage war against Christians who are urged to stand firm and resist them (Eph 6:10-20). But that resistance is not merely passive: God's people are also the means used of God to wage war on the realm of darkness and extend the kingdom of God and his Christ (see particularly Eph 6:15, 19-20).

We conclude this brief introduction with an extended quote from O'Brian:

The letter to the Ephesians is one of the most significant documents ever written...

Whether it is because of its magnificent sweep of God's saving purposes from election before the foundation of the world to his summing up of all things in Christ, the place of the exalted Christ within those purposes and believers' relationship to him, God's victory in Christ over the powers, the grand presentation of the church, its language of worship and prayer, or the scope and depth of its ethical teaching, Ephesians has had a profound influence on the life of many.

But the letter has not only had a significant impact on the lives of men and women in the past. It also speaks with great power to our contemporary situation. To a world that seems to have lost all sense of direction, and a society that for all its achievements is in a mess, the divine analysis of the human predicament along with God's gracious and comprehensive salvation, such as is found in Ephesians 2:1-7, ultimately provides the only hope for a world that stands under divine judgment. Klyne Snodgrass aptly remarks, 'The understanding of the gospel in Ephesians challenges and redefines the superficial understanding of the gospel prevalent in our day.'

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Ephesians

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| Beare, F.W. | <i>The Epistle to the Ephesians</i> (Interpreter's Bible), Nashville, Abingdon, 1953 |
| Eadie, John | <i>Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians</i> , Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1883 |
| O'Brian, Peter T. | <i>The Letter to the Ephesians</i> , Leicester, Apollos, 1999 |
| Stott, John | <i>God's New Society</i> (Bible Speaks Today Series), Leicester, IVP, 1979 |

³ O'Brian suggests that "Having addressed a specific problem in Colossians, Paul has remodelled his letter for a more general Christian readership."

Ephesians 1:1-2

"The repetition of the name of Christ in each of the three parts of the salutation foreshadows the manner in which the whole epistle will bring out the central significance of Christ for the life of the church in all its aspects. Christ commissions the apostle; he is the sphere of faith for the saints; and in unison with the Father he confers upon believers the divine gifts of grace and peace." Beare

Verse 1

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

Cf. Col 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1. "To speak of himself as an apostle of *Christ Jesus* not only signifies that he belongs to Christ, but also that he is a messenger who is fully authorised and sent by him. As an apostle he has the authority to proclaim the gospel in both oral and written form, as well as to establish and build up churches (see on 2:20 and 4:11). He has been called to this ministry 'through the will of God', an expression that appears four times in the space of a few verses (vv. 1,5,9,11...) and has particularly to do with God's saving plan, or some aspect of it. Paul's calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles fits within that gracious divine plan (cf. 3:1-13). He had not appointed himself to this position; God chose him. Hence the words *by the will of God* have overtones of God's unmerited grace, and emphasise that there was no personal merit on Paul's part either in becoming an apostle or in continuing as one." O'Brian.

ἅγιος, α, ον holy, consecrated

τοῖς ἁγίοις members of the holy community of God's people. The term was formerly applied to Israel (2:19, see also Ex 19:6, Deut 7:6 and 1 Peter 2:9), but is now applied to Christians. "They are set apart for him and his service; as the people of his own possession they are the elect community of the end time whose lives are to be characterised by godly behaviour. Paul will expand on the implications of this term at 1:4, where holiness is the intended result of God's election, and at 5:26,27, where it is viewed as the effect of Christ's death on behalf of his church." O'Brian

οὖσιν Verb, pres ptc, m & n dat pl εἶμι

O'Brian sums up the textual evidence regarding ἐν Ἐφέσῳ saying, "ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ('in Ephesus') is omitted by p⁴⁶ & B 424^c 1739 Basil, Origen, apparently Marcion (who called the letter 'the epistle to the Laodiceans'), and Tertullian... p⁴⁶ differs slightly from the others in that it omits τοῖς ... before οὖσιν... The vast majority of manuscripts read τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ καὶ πιστοῖς... However, the combination of p⁴⁶ (which dates from the beginning of the third century and is the earliest manuscript we have of this letter), &, and B is strong external evidence for the omission of the place name from the original." He continues, "This is consistent with the internal evidence of the letter ... where little in the contents suggests that it was written to a church where Paul has ministered for the best part of three years. There is no mention of 'individuals or groups among the people addressed; there are no allusions to features or problems in the local situation'. The only personal reference, apart from Paul himself, is to Tychicus, whom the apostle is sending to the readers so that he might inform them of his personal circumstances (6:21-22)... We conclude that Ephesians was a general epistle sent to mainly Gentile believers in south-western Asia Minor, and that it was linked with Ephesus at an early stage, perhaps because of its being a strategic church or because it was one of the several cities to which the letter was sent."

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy, believing

The term can mean either faithful, or believing (see Acts 10:45). Both seem to be implied here. O'Brian thinks the primary emphasis is upon them as 'believers.'

ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ a key expression in this epistle.

"To be 'in Christ' is to be personally and vitally united to Christ, as branches to the vine and members to the body and thereby also to Christ's people." John Stott, *God's New Society*

Verse 2

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

χαρις, ιτος f grace, unmerited favour
εἰρηνη, ης f peace

Cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; Philem 3. "Instead of the standard Hellenistic greeting χαρειν, he employs the similar-sounding but theologically more profound χάρις ('grace'), together with the Greek rendering of the Jewish greeting for 'peace'." O'Brian

χαρις ... εἰρηνῆ are also key themes of this epistle: χαρις 2:5,7,8; εἰρηνῆ 2:14-17.

πατὴρ Noun, gen s πατήρ, πατρός m
father

καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ The absence of a second ἀπό joins Father and Son together as a single source of grace and peace.

Verses 3-14

"A magnificent hymn of adoration, recounting the spiritual blessings which God bestows upon his people in Christ, culminating in the introduction of the central theme – the revelation of God's purpose to 'gather together in one all things in Christ' (1:10); and pointing to the progressive realisation of that purpose in the Jews (1:11-12), who now find their hope of Messiah fulfilled, and in the Gentiles (1:13-14) who hear the gospel of salvation and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Beare.

O'Brian says that these verses are a "typical Old Testament and Jewish style of extended eulogy or *berakah* ('Blessed be God, who has ...')." It consists of one long sentence (of 202 words), full of relative clauses.

Verse 3

Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ,

εὐλογητός, η, ον blessed, praised

As in the LXX, so in the NT, this adjective is never applied to man. In the NT it is used only of God. He is pronounced blessed because he is the source of all blessing. As this verse makes clear, it is because of the blessing which he has bestowed upon us that we pronounce him to be blessed. "Paul's eulogies do not express a wish; they describe a fact (Blessed *is* God'), as he proclaims that God is the source of all blessing." O'Brian

ὁ θεὸς καὶ Πατήρ του Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ either 'God who is the Father of our Lord ...' or 'the God of, and Father of ...' (cf. Jn 20:17). When God appeared to Moses at the burning bush he announced himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:6). He is now pleased to be known as the 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' cf. Heb 1:1-2.

εὐλογεῶ speak well of, bless

εὐλογία, ας f blessing, praise

πνευματικός, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to the spirit

εὐλογία πνευματικῆ are the blessings which are ours in Christ and which are conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit. "The adjective does not primarily point to a contrast with what is material (e.g.. Deut 28:1-14), secular or worldly. Nor do Paul's words suggest simply the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:3-11." O'Brian

ἐπουράνιος, ον heavenly

The phrase occurs also in 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12, the first two of which shed light on its use here. Christ is now in the heavenly places and all of our blessings are to be found in him. As the Spirit conveys these blessings to us we are united with Christ and through that union enjoy the blessings which he has for us. More than that, the Spirit brings us into a new sphere of life (the life of the heavenly realm), which is marked not only by blessing in Christ but also by spiritual warfare (see the latter references above). "*In the heavenly realms* is bound up with the divine saving events and is to be understood within a Pauline eschatological perspective. In line with the Jewish two-age structure heaven is seen from the perspective of the age to come, which has now been inaugurated by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ." O'Brian

Stier suggests a contrast with the OT sphere of blessing which was 'in Canaan.'

Verse 4

καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ,

καθὼς as, inasmuch as

The sense here is that the blessings given us in Christ are precisely those which, in eternity past, God planned for those whom he would have to be his own.

ἐξελέξατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἐκλεγομαι choose, select

The pervasive use of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ in this letter (and elsewhere in Paul) indicates that all God does for the salvation of his people he does in Christ. This applies not only to what has been done for us through Christ's earthly life, death and resurrection, but also to the eternal plans and purposes of God. These also were plans towards us *in Christ* in that Christ is the heart and focus of these plans and the one to whom they were and are entrusted. We are chosen in him. "He is the Chosen One par excellence (Luke 9:35; 23:35." O'Brian This election is both corporate and personal.

καταβολή, ης f beginning, creation

Cf. 1 Thess 1:4; 2:13, also Rom 8:29; 2 Tim 1:9. Christianity is no afterthought of God, no *ad hoc* response to the failure of Judaism. God's plans for his people in Christ, plans for Jew and Gentile, are plans determined before the foundation of the world and are plans which shape the entire Bible story – indeed, the whole of human history. "To say that election took place before creation indicates that God's choice was due to his own free decision and love, which were not dependent upon temporal circumstances or human merit. The reasons for his election were rooted in the depths of his gracious, sovereign nature. To affirm this is to give Christians the assurance that God's purposes for them are of the highest good, and the appropriate response from those who are chosen in Christ from all eternity is to praise him who has so richly blessed us." O'Brian

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι

an infinitive of design, 'that we should be ...' Election is the ground of holiness. "Election does bring privilege, but it also carries with it responsibility. The divine purpose in our election was not simply to repair the damage done by sin but also to fulfil God's original intention for humankind, namely, to create for himself a people perfectly conformed to the likeness of his Son (Rom 8:29-30)." O'Brian

ἀμωμος, ον faultless; without blemish
κατενωπιον before, in the presence of

Cf. Col 1:22. "The two adjectives *holy and blameless* were used to describe the unblemished animals set apart for God as Old Testament sacrifices (Exod 29:37-38; cf. Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19). But already within the Old Testament this language was employed to describe ethical purity (e.g., Ps 15[LXX 14]:2; 18:23 [17:24])." O'Brian

ἐν ἀγαπῇ To what do these words refer? The answer is linked with the way in which you punctuate these verses.

The AV and UBS Greek text treat these words as belonging with the words that precede them and therefore qualifying God's act of choosing his people – his election was motivated by love. The RSV and NIV understand these words to belong with what follows in verse 5: "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons ..."

The proximity of the phrase ἐν ἀγαπῇ to προορισας and its distance from ἐξελεξατο would seem to favour the second view, though O'Brian favours the former, saying, "On balance it is preferable to attach 'in love' to what precedes so that it is viewed as part of the goal election is intended to achieve, namely, 'a life before God which is holy and blameless and lived in love'."

Verse 5

προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ
Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ
θελήματος αὐτοῦ,

προορίζω decide from the beginning,
predestine

The difference between this and election is that here the focus is upon the goal, the end which God had in mind.

"Believers praise God the Father because his purpose in choosing them was to bring them into a personal relationship with himself as his children." O'Brian

υἰοθεσια, ας f adoption, sonship

Adoption "was understood in Graeco-Roman law, as referring to the adoption as sons of those who were not so by birth. It signified entry into a privileged position. Paul applies this term from the Graeco-Roman world to the special relationship which believers have with God. This reference to adoption must also be understood against the background of Israel's relationship with the Lord as his 'firstborn son' (Exod 4:22; Isa 1:2), a relationship which was established at the Exodus: 'When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son' (Hos 11:1). Paul asserts that adoption as sons was one of the particular privileges belonging to Israel (Rom 9:4). Now it belongs to Christians (cf. Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18)." O'Brian. On adoption, see also Romans 8 and Galatians 4 where it is linked with the idea of being an 'heir,' cf. v.11 below.

διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Jesus is the mediator of this adoption. He is *the* Son of God, and it is only in and through him that we are made children of God.

εἰς αὐτόν for himself: it is God's purpose to bring us to himself.

εὐδοκία, ας f good will, pleasure

Adoption was not motivated by some need in God; he purposed to do this simply because it pleased him so to do. "... signifies not simply the purpose of God but also the delight that he takes in his plans... Consequently, as men and women break out into praise (vv. 3,6,12,14), their pleasure in God is a response to his delight in doing good to them." O'Brian

θελημα, ατος v.1

Verse 6

εις ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς
ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ,

ἔπαινος, ου m praise, commendation

Cf. vv. 12,14. God's ultimate purpose is to display the glory of his grace in saving a people for himself and, as a result, receive the praise both of those whom he has redeemed and of those who look on in the spiritual realms (cf 3:10,11).

χαριτω bestow on freely

ἡγαπημένῳ Verb, perf pass ptc, m/n dat s

ἀγαπαω love, show love for

'Beloved' is a frequent title of Christ, see Mt 3:17; 17:5; Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9,10,11; Col 1:13. It was used in the OT of Israel as God's beloved people, see Deut 33:12; Isa 5:17; Jer 11:15; 12:7.

We are not adopted because God lacked a son upon whom he could lavish his love. "The term 'Beloved' here in v.6 shows that God's election of believers to be his sons and daughters is intimately related to their being in Christ the Chosen One (cf. v.5), and that the bounty which he lavishes on them 'consists in their being caught up into the love which subsists between the Father and the Son' [Caird] (cf. John 3:35; 5:20; 17:23,26)." O'Brian

Verse 7

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος
αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ
τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

ἀπολυτρωσις, εως f redemption,
deliverance, setting free

This word has both a Greek and Jewish background. Greek prisoners or slaves were redeemed by means of a payment. In the OT 'redemption' has three elements:

- i) Deliverance, particularly from the bondage of Egypt (Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 1 Chron 17:21 etc.);
- ii) The initiative of a Redeemer (goel);
- iii) The payment of a price (particularly for redemption from bond service).

αἷμα, ατος f blood

ἄφεσις, εως f forgiveness, cancellation (of sins)

παραπτωμα, τος n sin, wrongdoing

"The apostle places the forgiveness of sins in apposition with redemption, not as its only element, but as a blessing immediate, characteristic and prominent." Eadie

"The 'forgiveness of sins' (lit. 'trespasses') does not occur frequently in Paul's writings. Normally he refers to 'sin' in the singular, as a power which entered the world through Adam's action (Rom 5:12) and since then has tyrannised men and women until that power was broken by Christ's death on the cross (Rom 8:3, etc). However, 'forgiveness of sins' is implicit in the great Pauline themes of justification (cf. Rom 4:5-8) and reconciliation, so too much should not be made of this 'omission'." O'Brian

κατα "The preposition which speaks of the norm that governs something (= 'in accordance with') at the same time provides the reason (= 'because') for that deliverance." O'Brian. I.e. the 'riches of his grace' are the ultimate cause of our redemption.

πλοῦτος, ου m & n riches, wealth

Verse 8

ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ
φρονήσει

περισσευω abound; cause to abound

σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence

φρονήσει Noun, dat s φρονησις, εως f
insight, wisdom, way of thinking

Eadie thinks this final phrase should be joined with what follows rather than with what precedes it (as AV and NIV). Concerning this 'wisdom and understanding', many argue that it refers to the wisdom of God in redemption, but others (including Bengel, Meyer, Lloyd-Jones, O'Brian) believe it to be a reference to the wisdom and understanding given to the Christian to enable him/her to comprehend what God has done. O'Brian adds "God's lavish grace has bestowed on us not only redemption, but along with this all the necessary wisdom and insight by which we should live wisely (cf. 5:15), particularly in the light of his saving plan in Christ (which is developed in what follows)."

Verse 9

γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος
αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ ἣν προέθετο
ἐν αὐτῷ

γνωρίζω make known, disclose

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery (of something formerly unknown but now revealed)

In Paul's usage 'mystery' has nothing to do with the secret doctrine of the initiated, common in the mystery religions, but refers to God's disclosure of his redemptive purposes in Christ. These previously were only partly disclosed but now have been made fully known. O'Brian draws attention to its eschatological nuance – in Judaism it is used of an event that will be revealed at the end of history.

θελημα, ατος n see v.1

εὐδοκία, ας f see v.5

προέθετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

προτιθεμαι plan, purpose, intend; show openly

'In Him' Eadie argues that this is a reference to God himself rather than to Christ, but this does not seem to fit so well into the flow of Paul's argument. O'Brian quotes Lincoln, "God's carefully designed strategy to make known the mystery, like the mystery itself, has always had its focus in Christ."

Verse 10

εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· ἐν αὐτῷ,

οἰκονομία, ας f (divine) plan

A word used in the Greek of God's ordering and administration of the universe. It refers here to the manner in which God's purpose is being worked out in human history.

πληρωμα, τος n fulness, completeness

καιρος, ου m time (viewed as occasion), appointed/proper time

An apocalyptic phrase, cf. its use in Gal 4:4. Beare comments, "The abstract notion of 'time' as a continuous entity, an 'everflowing stream,' is scarcely to be found in the NT. We have instead the idea of a succession of seasons or world periods, each marked by decisive events which determine its character, and each contributing to the succeeding age and to the final issue. From this point of view the NT writers represent the Christian Era as the last in the series of ages, inaugurated by the saving acts of Christ – incarnation, Passion, Exaltation – and consummated by his manifestation in glory."

ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι Verb, aor midd infin

ἀνακεφαλαιοω sum up, bring together

Introducing an explanatory infinitive clause.

"The increasing consensus among modern scholars is that the unusual verb used here derives from a word meaning the 'main point', 'sum', or 'summary' (cf. Acts 22:28; Heb 8:1) rather than 'head', and that its basic meaning is 'to bring something to a main point', or 'to sum up'. In connection with Christ's eschatological relationship to a multitude of entities (including personal beings), the text suggests that God's 'summing up' of these entities in Christ is his act of 'bringing all things together in (and under) Christ, i.e. his unifying of them in some way in Christ' [Turner]... The mystery which God has graciously made known refers to the summing up and bringing together of the fragmented and alienated elements of the universe ('all things') in Christ as the focal point." O'Brian

γη, γης f earth

Cf. Rom 8:21. Carries the thought of the restoration of the whole of creation through Christ (see also 1 Cor 15:24; Col 1:16,20).

Verse 11

ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργούντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ,

ἐκκληρώθημεν Verb, aor pass indic, 1 pl
κληροω choose

The verb means 'appoint or choose by lot.' ἐν ᾧ ἐκκληρώθημεν perhaps 'in whom we were chosen as God's own people.' O'Brian suggests, 'we were claimed by God as his portion' cf. Deut 32:8-9.

In context, the reference would seem to be to Paul and his fellow *Jewish* believers (so Beare, O'Brian). Verses 11 and 12 speak of Jewish believers before the transition to second person plural in v.13 shifts the focus to the Gentiles.

προορισθέντες Verb, aor pass ptc, m nom pl
προορίζω see v.5

προθεσις, εως f purpose, plan, will

ἐνεργεω work, be at work (in)

βουλή, ης f purpose, intention, plan, decision

θελημα, ατος n see v.1

Verse 12

εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ·

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἰμι

ἔπαινος, ου m see v.6

δοξα, ης f glory

"In v.5 the adoption of believers as God's sons and daughters, which was the purpose of their predestination, redounds to *the praise of his glorious grace*. Here also *the praise of his glory* is the object for which those who 'first hoped in Christ' were chosen as the Lord's portion." O'Brian

προηλπικότας Verb, perf act ptc, m acc pl
προελπιζω be the first to hope

Paul speaks of Jewish believers as the first to hope in Christ – first to hope in the Messiah.

Verse 13

ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ,

ὑμεῖς – the focus shifts to Gentile believers but the prefixed ἐν ᾧ καὶ emphasises that they are considered not as a separate group but along with and united with Jewish believers as one people in Christ.

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality
εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel
σωτηρια, ας f salvation

"The appositional expression, *the gospel of your salvation* (cf. Rom 1:16), with its emphatic personal pronoun *your* reminds the readers of their conversion, and draws attention to what this powerful message has accomplished for them." O'Brian

πιστεω believe (in), have faith (in)

Some (e.g. Lloyd-Jones) have argued for a two stage experience, first the believing and then later the sealing. But most commentators (Simpson, Dunn, Bruce, Lincoln, O'Brian) treat this is a 'coincident aorist participle', i.e. the believing led immediately and by way of consequence to the sealing (see NIV). O'Brian notes, "The participle does not here express antecedent action, as though the Gentiles believed and then *subsequently* were sealed with the Holy Spirit. Rather, the believing and being sealed were two sides of the one event."

ἐσφραγίσθητε Verb, aor pass indic, 2 pl
σφραγιζω seal, secure with a seal
ἐπαγγελια, ας f promise, what is promised

"When Gentiles received the Spirit the Old Testament promise was fulfilled, as in Galatians 3:14 so here the Spirit is to be understood as the content of the promise. On the other hand, the expression has been taken to signify that the Holy Spirit brings the promise of glory yet to come (cf. Eph 4:30)." O'Brian

ἅγιος, α, ου see v.1

Is it the Holy Spirit who does the sealing or is it the Holy Spirit who constitutes the seal? On the former view, sealing is a subjective experience of some sort, such as assurance (e.g. Goodwin). The latter seems to fit better with Paul's theology of the Holy Spirit and with the following verse. The picture is both of a mark of ownership and also a protective seal. "God has made them his inviolable possession, the pledge of this is the Spirit of God in the heart." Fitzer.

Verse 14

ὅ ἐστιν ἄρραβὸν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιουτήσεως, εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.

MSS evidence is divided between ὁ and ὅς. Metzger writes concerning the UBS text, "It is difficult to decide whether copyists altered ὅς to ὁ to make it agree with the gender of πνευμα, or whether ὁ became ὅς by attraction to the gender of the following ἄρραβων, according to a usual idiom. On the basis of what was taken to be a superior external attestation, a majority of the Committee preferred the reading ὁ."

ἄρραβων, ωνος m pledge, guarantee (of what is to come)

The Holy Spirit is a pledge or down payment (cf. 2 Cor 1:22). His presence marks the Christian out as belonging to God. He is also an eschatological gift imparting something of the blessings of the age to come (cf. 4:30).

κληρονομια, ας f inheritance, what is promised

ἀπολυτρωσις, εως f see v.7

περιουησις, εως f obtaining, gaining

Some think that the reference is to the inheritance *we* will gain – a possessing of *our* inheritance. But the reference is more probably to *us* as *God's* possession – he has redeemed us that we may be his. "In the Old Testament God's people, Israel, are called by Yahweh 'my own possession from among all peoples' (Exod 19:5; cf. Deut 14:2; 26:18, and especially Mal 3:17, 'They will be mine, says the Lord Almighty, in the day when I make up my treasured possession'). This term occurs in the same sense in 1 Peter 2:9, where believers are called 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for [God's own] *possession*'." O'Brian

εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ "The glory of *God* is the final aim of the whole unfolding salvation." O'Brian. Cf. Is 43:20-21.

Verses 15-23

"At the conclusion of this magnificent eulogy, Paul includes an introductory thanksgiving paragraph in which he gives thanks to God for his readers (vv. 15-16a), and then intercedes for them (vv. 16b-19). In the following verses (vv. 20-23), which are a continuation of the same sentence, God is praised for exercising his mighty power in raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to be head over all things for the church." O'Brian

Verse 15

Διὰ τοῦτο ἀγάω, ἀκούσας τὴν καθ' ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους,

δια τουτο links the thanksgiving back to the eulogy that precedes it, especially vv. 13-14.

καγω from και ἐγω and I, but I, I also πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief, the Christian faith

Some significant MSS omit τὴν ἀγάπην (p⁴⁶ n* A B). Without these words 'faith' would include the sense 'faithfulness' since it is also towards 'the saints.' However, the longer reading is probably to be preferred. Metzger thinks the shorter to be due to an accident in transcription. Beare however prefers the shorter reading.

ἅγιος, α, ον see v.1

Verse 16

οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μνησιν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου,

πανω midd stop, cease, cease from εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks μνησιν, ας f remembrance, mention

Beare thinks that the phrase μνησιν ποιησθαι refers particularly to intercession.

Verse 17

ἵνα ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης, δώῃ ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ,

"Petitionary prayer is an essential weapon in his apostolic armoury." O'Brian.

πατηρ, πατρος m father
δοξα, ης f glory

Of the phrase πατηρ της δοξης Beare says it "invites us at once to approach him with the simple confidence and affection of a child, and to adore him as the sum and source of all perfection." The meaning is both that God is the 'glorious Father' and that he is the *source* of all true glory.

δωη Verb, aorist act opt, 3 s δίδωμι

Either:

- i) a receptive spirit, eager for the truth which God will reveal; or,
- ii) reference to the Holy Spirit, the source of wisdom and revelation in the believer.

The NIV (by its capitalisation) opts for the latter, which O'Brian also considers the more likely. On the content of this prayer, cf. vv. 8-9.

σοφια, ας f see v.8

Wisdom has to do with knowledge of God's will.

ἀποκαλυψις, εως f revelation

I.e. knowledge and understanding of his saving plan.

ἐπιγνωσις, εως f knowledge

"Knowledge is closely connected with *the knowledge of Christ and conformity to his holiness*, which, in turn, is the substance of *God's self-revelation*' [Moule]. Paul's use of this term here (cf. Col 2:2; 3:10) and its cognate noun (Eph 3:19; cf. Col 2:3) may stand over against the faulty notions of wisdom and knowledge circulating in Asia Minor. His prayer, then, is for the true knowledge of God. What this means is explained in the rest of the prayer in vv. 18-19." O'Brian.

Verse 18

πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ, τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις,

πεφωτισμένους Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc pl φωτιζω give light to, reveal, enlighten

Cf. 2 Cor 4:6. Once Paul's readers were darkened in their understanding, cf. 4:18.

τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας cf. Pss 13:3 [LXX 12:4]; 19:8 [18:9]. A prayer that they might see with the eyes of the heart.

εἰδέναι Verb, perf act infin οἶδα know, understand

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope, what is hoped for

κλησις, εως f call, calling

Not 'hope of your calling,' i.e., the 'hope to which he has called you.' "This hope to which God has called them is linked with 'the summing up of all things in Christ', which is the final purpose of God's saving activity in his Son (1:10). Hope is what the Gentile readers did not have before they believed (2:12). Elsewhere Paul describes the hope to which God has called believers as that of sharing in the glory of God (Rom 5:2), the expectation of appearing with Christ in glory when he is revealed (Col 3:4)." O'Brian

πλουτος, ου m & n riches, wealth
κληρονομια, ας f inheritance, what is promised

Either or both:

- i) The inheritance to which he admits us among his holy ones; and,
- ii) The heritage which God is claiming for himself among his sanctified people.

O'Brian prefers the latter sense, cf. his comments on v.11. "That God should set such a high value on a community of sinners, rescued from perdition and still bearing too many traces of their former state, might well seem incredible were it not made clear that he sees them in Christ, as from the beginning he chose them in Christ' [Bruce]. As a consequence, then, Paul prays that his readers might appreciate the extraordinary value God places on them." O'Brian

Verse 19

καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ

ὑπερβαλλω surpass
μεγεθος, ους n greatness
πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)

We must not lose sight of the fact that Paul is praying that they may understand the greatness of God's power *at work in them*. Paul's words may have been directed particularly to the needs of a people in western Asia Minor who may have been converted out of a background of magic, the Artemis cult and astrological beliefs and who were still engaged in a struggle with spiritual powers.

ἐνεργεια, ας f (supernatural) working, power
κρατος, ους n might, strength, power
ισχυς, υος f strength

The words expressing power are piled up one after another to underline the surpassing greatness of God's power.

Verse 20

ἦν ἐνήργηκεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις

ἐνεργεω work, be at work (in)
ἐγειρω raise
νεκρος, α, ον dead

The supreme manifestation of the power of God is seen in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. His exultation is the guarantee that his people shall be exalted in and with him, cf. 1 Cor 6:14; 15:43; Phil 3:21. Fitzmeyer remarks that this resurrection power, "emanates from the Father, raises Jesus from the dead at the resurrection, endows him with new vitality, and finally proceeds from him as the life-giving, vitalising force of the 'new creation' and of the new life that Christians in union with Christ experience and live."

καθιζω sit down; trans cause to sit, set
δεξιος, α, ον right, δεξια right hand

Cf. Ps 110:1, and note Jesus own use of this Psalm when brought before the Sanhedrin, Matt 26:64; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:41-44. "To be at someone *right hand* is to be in the position of special honour and privilege (1 Kings 2:19). In the Old Testament the Lord's right hand is the position of favour (Ps 80:18; Jer 22:24), victory (Ps 20:6; 44:3; Isa 41:10), and power (Exod 15:6; Ps 89:13; Isa 48:13). For Christ, then, to be seated at God's right hand meant sharing the Father's throne (Rev 3:21)." O'Brian

ἐπουρανιος, ον heavenly, celestial

Verse 21

ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι·

ὑπερανω prep with gen far above; above
ἀρχη, ης f beginning, power,
ἐξουσια, ας f authority, power

Cf. mention of ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως in 3:10 and 6:12 and also Col 1:16, 2:10, 15. For more on these terms, see O'Brian, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church" in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, Ed DA Carson, Paternoster, Exeter, 1984 pp. 110-150. O'Brian rejects the reductionist approach of Wink who thinks the powers are to be demythologised or collapsed into human rulers or political structures which oppress people.

κυριότης, ητος f (angelic) power (believed to have some control over human fate);
authority

ὄνομα, τος n name, title

ὀνομαζῶ name, call; pass be known

Paul seems here to be referring to supernatural powers (cf. 2:2; 3:10). The Gnostics and some Jewish groups had developed an elaborate categorisation of spiritual beings. Beare thinks that Paul's words 'every name that is named' contain an element of mockery of such schemes, as if he were saying "whatever else anyone likes to call them". O'Brien thinks "the context suggests that the powers were given their names by God, thus pointing to their inferiority to him." Note also the comment on possible background on v.19 above.

μονον adv only, alone

αἰων, αἰωνος m age, world order

μελλω (before an infin) be going; (ptc. without infin) coming, future

"Christ's rule is supreme over every name of renown whether belonging to *the present age* or *the one to come*, whether in the present or in the future. The distinction between 'this age' and 'the coming age' is drawn from Jewish apocalyptic. With the first coming of the Lord Jesus the new age has already broken in upon the present, so that the two ages now overlap. The age to come has now been inaugurated but not yet consummated, and it is in this future sense that Paul refers to it here." O'Brien

Verse 22

καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῆ ἐκκλησία,

ὑποτασσω subordinate, put in subjection
πόδας Noun, acc pl πους, ποδος m foot

Cf. Ps 8:6. "The Psalmist recalls the language of Genesis 1:26-28 as he wonders in adoration at the honour which the Creator has bestowed on human beings by giving them dominion over the works of his hands. In the New Testament the words of the Psalm are applied to Christ as the last Adam (1 Cor 15:27; Heb 2:6-9). The 'everything' of the psalm, which refers to that part of creation below humankind in the hierarchy, now designates the whole universe, heaven and earth (cf. 1:10,23), and especially the spiritual powers which are subject to Christ. Although the complete fulfilment of these words will occur only when death is destroyed and God is all in all (1 Cor 15:27; Heb 2:8), Christ's present enthronement at God's right hand is 'assurance enough that this blessed consummation will come without fail' [Bruce]." O'Brien

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s δίδωμι

'given' is probably a Semitism reflecting the Hebrew יָחַד which can also mean 'appoint'.

κεφαλη, ης f head

"The term 'head' expresses his ruling authority." O'Brien

ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

O'Brien follows Banks (*Paul's Idea of Community*) in understanding such references to 'the church' not as references to some 'universal church' but "metaphorically of a *heavenly gathering* around Christ in which believers already participate (cf. Heb 12:22-24)." But he emphasises that "the dimension of the local congregation is also in view ... local congregations, as well as house-groups that meet in particular homes, are concrete, visible expressions of that new relationship which believers have with the Lord Jesus ... [and] earthly manifestations of that heavenly gathering around the risen Christ (cf. Heb 10:25)."

Verse 23

ἦτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου.

ὅστις, ἦτις, ὅ τι who, which
σωμα, τος n body

"It is probably best to understand this coordination of head and body as a natural development from Paul's earlier letters, where the body terminology and its constituent parts refer to the mutual relations and obligations of church members (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-27). In Colossians and Ephesians there is an advance in the line of thought so that the relationship which the church, as the body of Christ, bears to Christ as head of the body is treated. The Pauline concept of the 'body of Christ' may have come from Paul's encounter with the exalted Christ on the Damascus road, where the risen Christ identified himself with his followers: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). Further, the idea of the body of Christ can partly be explained in terms of the Old Testament concept of corporate personality where the movement between the one and the many can be expressed by the one term and yet have overtones of solidarity. For Paul, Christ as the Last Adam and second man is representative of the new humanity (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:22, 45-49), so that one is either 'in Adam' or 'in Christ'." O'Brien

πλήρωμα, τος n fulness, completeness

Is πλήρωμα active or passive, something that fills or something that is full?

Robinson and Beare argue that it is to be taken in an active sense, i.e. that the church fills Christ and completes his person in some way (see Col 1:24). But the thought of Christ filling the church is much more common in the NT. In Col 1, Christ is filled with God (he is the fulness of the divine Glory, cf. Ezek 44:4; Is 6:1; Jer 23:24; Hag 2:7) and in Col 2:10 we are to be filled with him. It is probably best therefore to understand πληρωμα passively (so O'Brian).

πληρωω fill, make full

"Christ pervades all things with his sovereign rule, directing all things to their appointed end (cf. Heb 1:3), and this entails his functioning as the powerful ruler over against the principalities (1:21) and giving grace and strength to his people, the church (4:13, 15-16)." O'Brian