

Wednesday March 22nd

Books and Bagels

7:30 -11 AM

LB at the Bridge Cafeteria

Capitol Commission Bible Studies are non-partisan, non-denominational. They meet weekly.

Legislator Only Bible studies, Tuesdays, 7:30 AM LOB 414 Capital
Contact: Kathy Voss, Sandersona@ncleg.net

Capitol Community Small Group Bible Studies
Women - Mondays, NOON, LB 2nd Floor
Jean Yost small group facilitator;
Capital Contact: Laura Sullivan McNeill@ncleg.net

Men, NOON, LB Chapel; Brad Harbaugh facilitator
Capital Contact: Laura Sullivan McNeill@ncleg.net

I pray that these Bible studies will be edifying to you. My sole intent is to serve you, and to be a resource to you for pastoral care, counsel, and prayer. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.

– Rev. Brad Harbaugh, North Carolina State Minister

Introduction:

The ocean is vast, beautiful, and breathtaking. If you wade into the waters at Cape Hatteras they will soon be over your head. The bottom of the Hatteras Canyon is 5,454 meters in depth. The depth of this much water is hard to grasp with our finite minds. The average depth of the Atlantic is 11,962 ft. and the maximum depth is 27,841 ft.¹ The Titanic lies 12,500 ft (3800 m), or 2.37 miles deep. According to Ocean base maps, 1500 meters to the bottom is known as ‘deep and abyssal.’²

The mind of God cannot be grasped well by our finite minds. Paul wrote to the Romans, “*O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways.*” (11:33) Isaiah the prophet wrote: “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts*” (55:8-9)

Ephesians chapter one will reveal some infinite and eternal truths. These truths come from the mind of the eternal God. Our minds cannot comprehend the eternal. Eternal is forever backwards and forwards. This word eternal reveals God as standing outside of time.

The Bible also discloses God as a Triune God, or Trinity; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each person of the Triune Godhead acted in creation. The Triune God is the creator of “all out of nothing,” (ek nahilo), (Gen 1:1; John 1:1-3). He created

time and space. Therefore God is not limited by His creation, and He stands outside of time and space. Therefore, it is reasonable to think that the depth of His work could cause the finite mind of created man to struggle with grasping foundational truths presented in Ephesians 1.

The foundational truth of God as a Father.

“*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*”
(Ephesians 1:3a)

God is a Father. This may seem like a simple truth but it is an absolutely crucial truth presented throughout the Bible. John the Apostle also affirms: “*Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.*” (1 John 2:22-23) Ephesians chapter one will present how God the Father and God the Son are the foundation of salvation. If you deny their relationship then there is no salvation.

The Bible presents the three persons of the Trinity as being equal in essence, attribute, and personhood yet distinct in roles. God the Father is the administrative head of the trinity, (1 Corinthians 11:3b). The term “Father” does not mean that God the Son is less than God. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day who studied the Scriptures understood that when Jesus spoke of God being His Father that He was stating equality with God. “*This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him[Christ]...he was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God, John 5:18.*” Scriptures bear out, “*the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Christ*” (Colossians 1:19) And, “*... in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, (2:9).*” The word “fullness” is the same Old Testament word speaking of the glory of God filling the tabernacle and temple. “*I looked and behold the glory of the Lord filled the temple.*” (Ezekiel 44:4)

Jesus not only bears God’s glory, but all that God is also dwells in Him. He possesses the wisdom, power, Spirit and glory of God. To say that all this fullness dwells in Jesus is to say that He is fully God.³ References to God the Father and God the Son are all throughout Ephesians 1:1-14. There is a deep secret revealed in this plan of God and their relationship.

Adoption is evidence that God is a Father. The Father having a Son allows something incomprehensible to unfold; the plan of God uniting all things to Himself, which includes the union of heaven and earth (Ephesians 1:10).

Human beings can be adopted as sons of God “in Jesus Christ”, (Eph.1:5). The veracity of our adoption as sons of God is presented in the first line of the prayer that Jesus told his disciples to pray. “*Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name...*” If there is no God the Father, there is no adoption as sons of God because this can only occur by our being placed positionally in Christ, God’s son. Adoption means to formally and legally declare that someone who is not one’s own child is henceforth to be treated and cared for as one’s own child, including complete rights of inheritance.⁴ The use of adoption would have been understood by the Greek culture. Greek law stated that a natural born son or daughter could be disowned, but not an adopted son or daughter.

¹ Ocean Basemap, <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=5ae9e138a17842688b0b79283a4353f6>

² Bailey, G. N.; Flemming, N. C. (2008). "Archaeology of the continental shelf: marine resources, submerged landscapes and underwater archaeology" (PDF). *Quaternary Science Reviews*.

³ ESV Study Bible Text note Colossians 1:19 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2295.

⁴ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, pp. 463–464). New York: United Bible Societies.

Adoption also conveys the reality that God chose us. Children do not work to be adopted, they are chosen to be adopted. This presents the truth seen throughout this book that salvation is a gift from God; not something that people achieve.

God, the Eternal Father, made decisions in eternity past that are beyond our comprehension. The Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was to be the exclusive person that would allow people and creation to be reconciled with God.

The second foundational truth is “in Christ”.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be blameless and holy before Him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, which he has blessed us in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3-6)

The letter to Ephesians states that believers are “in Christ” and alive in Christ contrasted to being “dead in sin” (Ephesians 2:1). Notice the usage of “in Christ,” “in Him,” and “in the Beloved”; these all point to a spiritual position in God the Son. Furthermore, the Son is presented in Ephesians chapter one as the vehicle in which all spiritual blessings are given in the heavenly places.

This phrase, “in the heavenly places,” points to the completed work of Jesus Christ. He came into the world to be the Redeemer of all. Notice Ephesians 1 verse 7, *“in Him we have redemption through His blood.”* The word redemption means, “to release or set free; it conveys the idea of freeing a slave.” In the very first book of the Bible God created the world without sin, but Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. What did God do? He confronted them but showed grace and made them coats of skin. Two animals died and their blood was shed to cover Adam and Eve’s sin. The result of Adam’s sin brought death upon all men for all have sinned (Romans 5:12). God provided a way of redemption from the beginning and throughout the Old Testament; it was a substitute sacrifice. An innocent unblemished animal, a lamb, represented the individual and the blood of the animal covered their sin before God. This sacrifice system, set up by the Law of God, pointed forward to the coming Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Isaiah 53 points to the coming Messiah being the substitute who would take our sins upon Himself and pay our debt before God.

Ephesians 1:7 declares, *“in Him we have redemption through His blood.”* In other words, Christ paid “once for all” the debt of our sin. This conveys a completed work of God the Son. The debt of our sin is paid in full! This was the second to the last statement Christ made on the cross, “Tetelestai” translated “It is finished!” This Greek word that Christ shouted before He died was declaring our redemption. The word “Tetelestai” was stamped on every bill after it was paid in full in that first century. Tetelestai means “the debt is paid in full”. Your debt of sin was paid completed by Christ on the cross, but it was paid by His shed blood. Only an eternal God can pay an eternal debt. This is the good news! Paul declared this redemption as a completed work. *“For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:20–23)*

Christ is the person of salvation; there is none other. Peter and John testified, *“there is salvation in no one else, for there is no*

other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) The disciples of Christ all died proclaiming this message to the world: there is only one Savior that has risen from the dead, Jesus Christ.

Have you opened this gift from God? Verse 13 explains how: Ephesians 1:13 (NIV84) ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, The gift of salvation is received by seeing your debt, and realizing your separation from God and putting your trust in the work of Christ alone, and declaring to God, I accept that I am a sinner, and you are God the Son, who died in my place and rose from the grave. I place my trust in You and ask that you forgive me and come into my life as my Lord and Savior. In the Name of God the Son Jesus Christ.

The choice of God in eternity past and the decision of a person to receive the gift are two truths that are presented in Scripture. God’s thoughts are way above ours, but praise God there is salvation.

“In the heavenly places” is used six times throughout the book of Ephesians, it speaks of the finished work of Christ and the spiritual position of each believer. The writer of Hebrews helps us understand the word “in the heavenly” as he explains the work of redemption.

When Christ came into the world, he said, *“Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.”* ⁸ *When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law),* ⁹ *then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second.* ¹⁰ *And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* ¹¹ *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.* ¹² *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,* ¹³ *waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.* ¹⁴ *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:7–14)*

“In the heavenly places” speaks of the finished work of Christ. “In Christ” speaks of the believer’s position, redeemed, justified, holy and blameless, an adopted son of God.

What a plan! The hymn writer wrote it beautifully: “O the love that drew salvation’s plan, O the mighty gulf that God did span, O the grace that brought it down to man, at Calvary.” (The word Calvary is used to describe the location of Christ’s crucifixion.)

The deepest truth, deeper than the sea, is the reality that God my Creator loves me!

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MONDAY (13TH OF MARCH) @ 12:00PM – 1:00PM, LB 2ND

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Truths Deeper than the Sea

March 6 – March 12, 2017

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