

## EPHESIANS 3A Study (NLT) "PLAN" AUGUST 22, 2010

**3:6 The unpopular plan - anyone can enter heaven:** "And this is the plan: The \_\_\_\_\_ have an \_\_\_\_\_ share with the Jews in all the \_\_\_\_\_ inherited by God's \_\_\_\_\_. Both groups have \_\_\_\_\_ the Good News, and both are part of the \_\_\_\_\_ body and enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ the promise of \_\_\_\_\_ through Christ Jesus."

**BOTH GROUPS - Love or Fear?** God is love. Love creates trust – the foundation of community life--because it does no harm but only helps the other person. The goal of love is brotherhood -- is family - is community-- is peace and goodwill on earth among all peoples. Jesus came as the "Prince of Peace." The angels sang at his birth. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill among men. Luke 2:14

**SECRET--or Mystery:** The Greek word "musterion" means to initiate into mysteries. In New Testament times most of the pagan religions had secrets that were made known only to those who were faithful in faith. We have some clubs and cults in our day that are like those "Mystery Religions." The mystery of the Messiah --what the Father intended by the coming of Jesus Christ to save the world -- could not be revealed until people could understand it. They could not understand it until God the Son had walked this earth and was shown to be a friend to all – the worst kind of sinners – and non-Jews. God's plan also needed the Holy Spirit to explain it to us. The Holy Spirit could not be poured into the hearts and minds of people until their hearts were cleansed by Christ.

**3:1-6 God's unpopular plan made Paul an unpopular preacher.** The new Christian religion was a huge threat to the leaders of Israel. It drew people away from the established Jewish religion. It included despised non-Jews—the \_\_\_\_\_. So when Paul the missionary to the non-Jews showed up in Jerusalem, they took him \_\_\_\_\_ and eventually got him put to death. However, Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of his enemies. He considered himself a prisoner of \_\_\_\_\_ because it was Jesus who had commissioned him to be a \_\_\_\_\_ to the Gentiles announcing that they also had God's \_\_\_\_\_. The Father of our Lord Jesus always had a \_\_\_\_\_ to bring peace among all men by making them brothers and sisters in their spirits. It was a \_\_\_\_\_ plan only because it had not been revealed to previous \_\_\_\_\_. But now it had been revealed by the \_\_\_\_\_, who explained the meaning of the death and resurrection of the Savior Jesus to God's holy \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ who were to declare this to the whole world.

**PRISONER:** Paul, like Jesus, was not a victim. Prisons and even death had not been able to hold him before. He allowed himself to be arrested and later put to death because his heart was committed to obey Christ. So he was not a prisoner of man but a prisoner of the Lord.

**3:7-9 Paul chosen to be the messenger of the Good News to the Gentiles.** When things are being said that affect people's lives we want to know "by what authority?" or "how do we know what you say is true?" Paul is saying something a lot of the Jewish Christians don't agree with—that God loves and includes the non-Jews in salvation but that by God's special \_\_\_\_\_ and mighty \_\_\_\_\_ he speaks. He did nothing to \_\_\_\_\_ it. He sees himself as the \_\_\_\_\_ deserving because he was an enemy of the church and caused it much harm before Jesus saved him. Paul was not a self-appointed preacher. He says that he did not wake up some morning and decide to tell the Good News to the Gentiles but

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that he was \_\_\_\_\_ by God. And it has not been a burden to him but a special \_\_\_\_\_ and privilege.

**CHOSEN.** Jesus in his glory—shining like the sun— met Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul was cast to the ground and blinded. Paul asked who he was. Jesus replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The Lord sent Ananias to Paul saying, "Go and lay your hands on him so that he can see again. Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for me." Acts 9:3-16

**3:10-11 God's wisdom shown to be true:** God, the Creator, wants to show the wisdom of His plan to the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the heavenly realm – the unseen by us -- world of intelligent spiritual beings – angels and others we do not know of – who live close to God. God will show them that His plan works when \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ live together in his \_\_\_\_\_. This has been his plan from \_\_\_\_\_ - from before the creation of this universe. This plan has been made reality by the works on earth of Christ Jesus, our \_\_\_\_\_.

- **VARIETY (manifold).** It means "much varied." There is more to God than any created being can understand. An arrogant man will say, "unless I can understand it – it is not real...so God and heavenly realms are not real." God says, "My thoughts are completely different from yours. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than you thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

A Christian says, "I'm glad I can't understand God because He wouldn't be God then."

- **RULERS:** We live in two worlds--the physical world and the spiritual or heavenly world/realm. In the heavenly realm there is a hierarchy of spiritual beings---archangels like Michael or Gabriel - and Lucifer (the Devil) and many others. How to save mankind was an issue of debate before the foundation of the world. Job 1:6-12 records a meeting of the heavenly authorities.

**3:12-13 The door to heaven is open to all.** The effect of Jesus coming to this earth was that people can come \_\_\_\_\_ into God's presence, \_\_\_\_\_ of a warm welcome. Paul tells these good folks not to \_\_\_\_\_ about what his enemies are doing to him while he sits in prison. His \_\_\_\_\_ are well worth what it is doing for these people, He has told the world he lives in about a wonderful gift to humanity – a wide open door between heaven and earth so anyone no matter of what creed, race, nationality, past history, personal defects, social standing, or whatever spiritual condition --- if they hope to find God in this world – they can. They should feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that they are worth the sufferings of Paul and the Master.

**SUFFERING - the suffering of those who give life.** It is like the suffering of a mother who carries the child for many months and endures the travail of childbirth – who is joyfully willing to do that in order that their child would be born into this world. Paul compares his life to that. "But O, my dear children! I feel as if I am going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives." Galatians 4:19

**What Does This Scripture Say To You?** \_\_\_\_\_

Therefore, God's Word exhorts us, "*Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.*" Romans 12:18 Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they for they shall be called sons of God.*" Matthew 5:9

- The goal of the Devil and wicked men is to create fear of other people. Fear is commonly used by politicians who promise to protect them from people the politician shows they need to fear. Fear of people we don't know—who are different from us-- and acting violently against them is a major cause of misery in this world.

- God's plan is to make people alike in

AUTHORITIES IN HEAVENLY REALMS • • PRISONER • COME INTO  
GOD'S PRESENCE • SECRET PLAN • PRISONER OF CHRIST • •

**1...1:1**\_\_\_\_\_ When Paul proclaimed-- That the Jews were not the only ones God loved.....When He told the Jews that letting Christ be their Lord was the only thing that would get them to heaven. That their laws, traditions and circumcision were almost a hindrance to their salvation. ....They were enraged – They started a riot in Jerusalem when he came there. They caused Paul to be arrested. They came and made false charges against Paul. The Roman rulers put him in prison to appease the Jews and sent him to Rome where he was eventually martyred .

**2. 1: 1**\_\_\_\_\_

**3. 1: 6**\_\_\_\_\_ For some thousands of years God focused on creating a single nation that would honor His Word and bear the prophecies of how He would work out salvation for the human race. Thereby Israel would be as a cradle for His Son to enter into this world as it's Savior. However, as time went on this single nation of Israel ignored the words of the Lord that they were a servant nation whereby all peoples of the world could be saved. They thought the plan of God began and ended in them. So the real plan of God was hidden from view until Jesus and His disciples began to lay out the good news plan. That people of every nation who called on the name of Jesus would become heirs of treasures beyond human imagination.

**4. 1: 10**\_\_\_\_\_

**5...1:12** \_\_\_\_\_