

blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will - to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.

"Chose us in Him" – God is outside constraints of time and space which are boundaries to us. This makes it easier to understand how He could choose us, at the beginning of creation, in the Son and for our own adoption into sonship. This is the most profound statement of how God sees us when our lives are under Christ's lordship.

"Praise of His... grace" – because it is unearned and freely given. Our worldview which emphasises merit makes it difficult for us to receive from God without working for His favour in some religious or sacrificial way.

7-9 In him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ...

"Redemption through His blood" – The first redemption was the release of the nation of Israel from slavery in the Exodus, with the Passover sacrifice and applying of the lamb's

IN PRACTICE Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is written to a spiritually mature readership. He reminds them of their identity in Christ and their adoption into sonship - with all the connotations of the privileges of a family heir that the Roman style of adoption conferred. But this was living as a believer in a Roman colony of an empire where Followers of the Way were commonly persecuted and death could be the result. Paul reminds these Spirit-filled believers that the inner witness of the Spirit of God is like a down payment on the experience of heaven. They were to be assured of their call and their destiny - and so are we.

QUESTION Why does Paul so emphasise us knowing who we are in Christ?

PRAYER Lord, my perspective is so limited compared with Yours! Help me to put my desire for 'success' into the context of Your greater kingdom purpose, and Your eternal timescale. I recognise that I can only ever be the forerunner of someone to follow, and involved merely in the foreshadowing of Your parts of Your plan yet to be unfolded. Humbly I pray this to the honour and glory of Jesus, Amen.

blood, foreshadowing for Christian believers the provision of Christ's shed blood from His sacrifice of Himself. Our redemption now is Christ's price paid for release from slavery to sin.

"Made known to us the mystery" – the Holy Spirit makes spiritual 'mysteries' plain, also referred to as our 'inner witness'.

10 ...to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment - to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will...

Scripture balances being chosen in a way which was predestined, and putting ourselves in a place to be chosen, our decision (below) to 1. put our hope in Christ, 2. hear the message of truth and 3. believe.

12 ...in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.

13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of His glory.

The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, July 15, 2018 with commentary notes

Church calendar readings for **Sunday, July 15**, in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand - or read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

Theme: How God's kingdom is

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19 - The Ark foreshadows Temple worship

Mark 6:14-29 - John the Baptist foreshadows Jesus' death

Ephesians 1:3-14 - The Holy Spirit foreshadows heavenly destiny

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19 » The Ark foreshadows Temple worship

The procession praises with passion, safeguarding the holiness of the ark

1 David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand.

2 He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.

"Baalah" – Kiriath Jearim, where the ark had stayed for 20 years during Saul's reign. "Called by the Name" – meaning that God owned it.

"Who is enthroned..." – In 1 Chron. 28:2 'the footstool of our God' sees the ark as the footstool of God's earthly throne. David wanted the ark prominent and central to remind people of God's ultimate kingship and rule.

3-5 They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with castanets,

harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

"Uzzah and Ahio" – sons or descendants. Moving the ark on a cart (as the Philistines did) was wrong; Levites were to carry it, Exodus 25:12-15, Numbers 4:4-6. This resulted in Uzzah's death, see verses 6-7 omitted and 1 Chron. 15:13-15.

12 Now King David was told, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God. So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.

"Blessed...Obed-Edom" – As the Lord had blessed the Levite caring for the ark, the blessing would come on Jerusalem. Correcting an earlier lack of reverence, David leads a praise procession.

13-14 When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

> continued

"Those who were carrying" – Kohathite Levites now have the ark on their shoulders. David consecrates this new phase of the journey in sacrifice.

"Linen ephod" – priestly garment for ministering to the Lord, like the boy Samuel, 1 Sam. 2:18.

16 As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

"Daughter of Saul... despised him" – She felt David's very different character undermined her father's memory. Michal's values emphasised kingship as a position. David's kingship prioritised responsibility for leading submission to the Lord; his heartfelt worship discounted personal dignity, vv. 21-23.

17-19 They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord. After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord Almighty. Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

"Blessed the people" – like Moses and Aaron outside the tent of meeting, when the glory of the Lord appeared, Lev. 9:23. And as Solomon would, dedicating the temple, 1 Kings 8:55-61.

IN PRACTICE Israel had lost the experience of the presence of God with them under Saul's woefully disappointing kingship. The Ark of the Lord was out of sight in an obscure place. The faith of the nation was at low tide.

Saul was proud and insecure, while David was a worshipper who exalted Yahweh as the real King of Israel. He recognised that bringing up the ark as the 'footstool of God' at the heart of the nation would get everyone looking to God, looking forward to temple worship that would follow under Solomon. If the ark was God with the nation, now Jesus is God with us in a personal way. Celebrating 'God with us' like David re-sets the balance of the spiritual realm which influences our lives.

QUESTION *David didn't care what anyone thought of his praise style. How could you be more expressive, more released, more abandoned to God?*

Mark 6:14-29 » John the Baptist foreshadows Jesus' death

King Herod has John the Baptist, a righteous and holy man, executed

14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

"King Herod" – a tetrarch over four districts.

15 Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

"He is Elijah" – Elijah's return (or one ministering

as Elijah did) was one of the last prophecies recorded, Malachi 4:5. As Elijah was the forerunner to Elisha, so 'Elijah returned' would be the forerunner to the Messiah. John, a wilderness-dwelling outsider ministered in the style as well as the "spirit and power of Elijah", Luke 1:17

16 But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

Herod, with a bad conscience, was superstitious.

17-20 For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He

did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

The vindictive nature of Herodias and indecisive 'king' Herod parallel the original Elijah's persecutor Jezebel and weak husband Ahab.

21-23 Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

"Half my kingdom" – as in Esther 5:3,6 not a literal

IN PRACTICE John was an Elijah-like figure who announced Jesus, and made a way for His ministry, preparing people by baptising in the River Jordan, for a Messiah who was expected but not understood. His forerunner role came to an abrupt end when he was executed at the request of the tetrarch's wife, who resented him deeply. He died a righteous man; His cousin was to die on a Roman cross as a man without sin.

David's initiative led to temple worship, then to the Lord Himself. John the Baptist's call brought awareness that the realm of God's rule and reign was starting to be realised.

QUESTION *What may you have done for God's kingdom with little glory but making a preparation for someone else's contribution? Why is this important?*

Ephesians 1:3-14 » The Holy Spirit foreshadows heavenly destiny

The seal of the Holy Spirit is evidence of God choosing us

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

"Praise be" – more literally, "Blessed be", in the style of daily Jewish prayers of the time.

promise. But to Herod appearance mattered.

24 She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

25 At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

26-29 The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her.

Clearly Herod saw in John an integrity and moral courage, vv. 17-20. But, a vain man in the company of military officers and people of power, he felt constrained not to appear weak.

So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Paul reminds readers of the spiritual identity of a Holy Spirit empowered believer – blessings are ours because of who we are "in Christ".

There is no disconnection between the blessing located "in the heavenly realms" and our life as it is lived out in a different place and influence.

4-6 For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and