

PFRS Commentary

Ephesians 1:3-14

By Roger Samsel

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Introduction and Thesis (Part I)

Ephesians 1:3-14 is the primary occasion for the doctrine of theistic determinism known as Calvinism. With John 6 and Romans 9-11, it is one of the three passages that Calvinists lean on heavily to establish their teaching. Our contention, however, is that the Calvinistic interpretation of these key passages is not exegetically sound.

How can Ephesians 1:3-14 be understood apart from a Calvinistic framework? The answer to that question is the principle thesis of this paper. In verse three of Ephesians 1, Paul wrote,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..."

It should be noted that in verses 3-12, Paul exclusively used **first person plural** personal pronouns (us, we, our). This fact is usually either not observed in commentaries or observed without any significance attached to its impact on a proper understanding of the passage. **The question to be asked in verses 3-12 is this: "Did Paul mean to include his Ephesian readers, or exclude them, in the statements of these verses?"** Either interpretation is grammatically possible, since the Greek (like English) uses the first person plural for both the "inclusive we" and "exclusive we." The former would mean Paul included his readers. The latter would mean he excluded them, having only in view himself and his associates. Here are verses 3-12 with the pronouns highlighted.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of **our** Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed **us** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose **us** in Him before the foundation of the world, that **we** should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

5 having predestined **us** to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made **us** accepted in the Beloved.

7 In Him **we** have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

8 which He made to abound toward **us** in all wisdom and prudence,

9 having made known to **us** the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

11 In Him also **we** have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

12 that **we** who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

In verse 13, Paul abruptly changed to **second person plural** pronouns (you, your).

13 In Him **you also** trusted, after **you** heard the word of truth, the gospel of **your** salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you** were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

15 Therefore I also, after I heard of **your** faith in the Lord Jesus and **your** love for all the saints,

16 do not cease to give thanks for **you**, making mention of **you** in my prayers:

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to **you** the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

18 the eyes of **your** understanding being enlightened; that **you** may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...

That Paul made this change suggests that he included himself as part of a group of persons in verses 3-12, but that he excluded his Ephesian readers, placing them in a distinct group. This is the **literal** interpretation of these pronouns. This change is grammatically significant. We should be able to identify to whom the pronouns refer.

In verse 12 Paul identified the group with which he identified himself as “we who **first hoped** in the Messiah.” It was the Hebrew nation exclusively that had previously hoped in the coming of the Messiah (cf. Luke 2:25-38, Jn. 1:41). The earliest known Christian commentary on this passage, written by Tertullian (2nd century), says precisely the same thing.

"Again, what Christ do the following words announce, when the Apostle says, 'That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ?' Now, who could have first trusted — ie., previously trusted — in God, before His advent, besides Jews to whom Christ was previously announced from the beginning? He who was thus foretold, was also

foretrusted. Hence, the Apostle refers the statement to himself, that is, to the Jews, in order that he may draw a distinction with respect to the Gentiles, (when he goes on to say:) 'In whom you also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel (of your salvation); in whom ye believed, and were sealed with His Holy Spirit of promise'." (Tertullian, Against Marcion, xvii)

The switch to second person pronouns therefore refers to Paul's Gentile readers. This makes sense in the context of the book where the relation between Jew and Gentile in the Gospel is one of the major themes and recurs frequently.

In summary, our position is that verses 3-12 contain Paul's praise to God for His historic and redemptive dealings with his own nation (Israel). All of the truths stated in these verses are historically significant and specific to that nation. Gentiles are nowhere included in these verses. Not until verse 13 did Paul address the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Gospel of the Messiah. The relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the Gospel is the major theme of the Book. If our hypothesis is correct, we should be able to discover many historical links and Scriptural allusions to the Old Testament in verses 3-12.

The Traditional Jewish Blessing (Part II)

Ευλογητος ο Θεος και πατηρ του Κυριου μων Ιησου Χριστου (Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ)

The adjective "ευλογητος" (*blessed*) is used only of God in the New Testament, never of men. Used without a verb of being, it is a *Hebraism* rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures. (A "Hebraism" is a word or phrase common among speakers of Hebrew or Jewish Aramaic that has been carried over into Greek in a form that would effectively identify the writer or speaker as Jewish). It is an expression of praise with the sense of "*may He be well-spoken of, extolled and honored.*" In the *Septuagint* (the Greek translation of the Old Testament, often abbreviated as LXX), it translates the Hebrew "baruch" in all of the following examples.

*And he said, **Blessed** be the LORD God of Shem ... (Genesis 9:26)*

*And he said, **Blessed** be the LORD God of Shem ... (Genesis 9:26)*

*And **blessed** be the most high God ... (Genesis 14:20)*

*And he said, **Blessed** be the LORD God of my master... (Genesis 24:27)*

There are many such examples in the Old Testament. "Ευλογητος" is invariably the word used in the Septuagint in these expressions and they are all identical in form to Paul's words in verse 3. We therefore conclude that Paul was employing

a very familiar Hebraism in this expression. The only variation in these expressions is the many different appellations that are ascribed to God: the Lord God, the Lord God of Shem, the Lord God of Abraham etc. This part of the expression differs according to the circumstances and according the attribute of God that is being extolled. In the present passage, Paul blessed the Lord as *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The Messianic hope was the superlative blessing with which God blessed the nation of Israel and it is in the Messiah that all her blessings and promises are to be fulfilled. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1,

*19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.
20 For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,

22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

ο ευλογησας ημας ... (who has blessed us...)

Observe also the use of the word “bless” in three cognate forms in verse 3, “blessed” (ευλογητος), “blessed” (ο ευλογησας), and “blessing” (ευλογία). All three of these cognate terms are used in similar passages throughout the Greek Old Testament (LXX).

Ο ευλογησας is an adjectival, aorist participle modifying God. It is also attributive ascribing to God the act of blessing. Regarding the verbal aspect of this participle, we take this as a constative aorist. As defined by Wallace,

“The aorist normally views the action as a whole, taking no interest in the internal workings of the action. It describes the action in summary fashion, without focusing on the beginning or end of the action specifically. This is by far the most common use of the aorist, especially with the indicative mood. The constative aorist covers a multitude of actions. The event might be iterative in nature, or durative, or momentary, but the aorist says none of this. It places the stress on the fact of the occurrence, not its nature.”¹

There are several good reasons to understand this as a constative aorist. There is no controlling verb to govern this participle, or rather, the controlling verb is the implied verb of being, “is” or “be,” in verse 3. Secondly, the nature of the modifying phrases is iterative (involving repetition) covering the whole of Israel’s history in the Old Testament beginning with her election “before the foundation

of the world," including the manifold blessings with which God blessed her, and including her practical sanctification and training in righteousness ("that we should be holy and without blame"). All of this is inherently iterative. This participle is modified by the following phrase, "εν παση ευλογια πνευματικη" (with every spiritual blessing).

The term "every spiritual blessing" is commonly interpreted as a type of blessing that exists in the New Testament in contrast to the so-called "physical blessings" of the Old Testament. This is an unwarranted dichotomy between the concepts of "spiritual" and "physical." The simplest meaning for "spiritual" is "proceeding from the Holy Spirit." As stated by Vincent and by Jamieson, Faucett and Brown.

"Paul emphasizes in this epistle the work of the divine Spirit upon the human spirit. Not spiritual as distinguished from bodily, but proceeding from the Holy Spirit." 2

"blessings--Greek, "blessing." "All," that is, "every possible blessing for time and eternity, which the Spirit has to bestow" (so "spiritual" means; not "spiritual," as the term is now used, as opposed to bodily)." 3

Elsewhere, Paul spoke of the Law of Moses as being "spiritual" (Rom. 7:14). Peter explicitly stated in 2 Peter 1 that the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament were given by the Holy Spirit. There is no valid exegetical or theological reason, therefore, to maintain that Israel's blessings enumerated in the Old Testament were not "spiritual."

εν τοις επουρανιοις εν Χριστω (in the heavenlies in Christ)

The word "places" is not found in the Greek text, but was added to some translations by the translators. Επουρανοις is an adjective, the plural form of "heavenly." "In the heavenlies" does not imply a dichotomy separating blessings that we will experience "in heaven" from blessings that exist (or existed) on earth. Our blessed hope is that when Christ returns, the kingdom of heaven will be present here on earth (cf. Dan. 2:44, Matt. 5:3,5,10,20, Matt. 8:11, Matt. 25:15-30). The expression "in the heavenlies" alludes to Israel's heavenly blessings promised in the Old Testament that originate in heaven, being "heavenly" (from heaven). Note the following:

25 By the God of your father who will help you, And by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

26 The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head

of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers. (Genesis 49)

15 Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey." (Deuteronomy 26)

Conclusion

When God determined to bless Israel, He did so 1) with every spiritual blessing, 2) in the heavenly places, and 3) with the Messiah. We are only in the beginning stages of this passage in proving our thesis. But let us dispense with the unscriptural notion that Israel's blessings in the Old Testament were somehow unspiritual and inferior to the Church's blessings in the New Testament.

The Election of Israel (Part III)

καθως και εξελεξατο ημας (just as He chose us)

The word "καθως" (just as) is a comparative adverb and in this case is used in an explanatory sense. As stated by Vincent,

καθως – Explaining blessed us, in verse 3. His blessing is in conformity with the fact that He chose. [5]

Thus, God's choosing (or "electing") of Israel is in conformity with, and explanatory of, His blessing of Israel. It answers the question, "How did God bless Israel?" Let us now look at the nature of this election.

εν αυτω (in Him)

The foundation for God's election of Israel is the Abrahamic Covenant, and so we should naturally expect that any discussion of Israel's election should reference this foundation. Let us look at Genesis 12:1-3.

1 Now the LORD had said to Abram:

*“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.*

2 I will make you a great nation;

*I will bless you
And make your name great;*

And you shall be a blessing.

*3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed..."*

7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants [=seed] I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

In Galatians 3 Paul interpreted this passage as a reference to the Messiah. Thus we see that it is in the Messiah or by the Messiah, that Israel, and indeed all the families of the earth, are blessed.

προ καταβολης κασμου (before the foundation of the world)

This phrase assures that this plan and purpose of God to choose a select nation, to bless that nation, through that nation to bring the Savior into the world, and through Him bless all peoples, was made before the beginning of creation.

ειναι ημας αγιους και αμωμους κατενωπιον αυτου εν αγαπη (that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love)

The infinitive *ειναι* (that we should be) is used adverbially modifying *εξελεξατο* (chose us) and is an infinitive of purpose. That is, it explains the reason why God chose Israel. God chose Israel in order that she should be a holy nation, and in order that she would stand before Him in love. These purposes of God in His election of Israel are spelled out explicitly in the very Old Testament passages that speak of her election.

Let us now identify some of these passages to which we have been claiming Paul was alluding. All of these specific ideas are contained in these Old Testament Scriptures. Paul was not giving new revelation about "election" and certainly not in the Calvinistic sense of that term. He was alluding to concepts that were contained in the Hebrew Scriptures and were well known to everyone familiar with these Scriptures. This is a lengthy series of quotations, but is necessary to establish three facts: 1) Israel's election was a well established and familiar concept in the Old Testament Scriptures; 2) these were the Scriptures to which Paul was alluding; and 3) it is this Old Testament concept of election that is in view in Ephesians 1.

Deuteronomy 1

10 The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. 11 May the LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He promised you!

Deuteronomy 4

7 "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?

8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

9 Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

10 especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children...'

32 "For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard.

33 Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?

34 Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

35 To you it was shown, that you might know [compare, "having made known to us ..."] that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him.

36 Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire.

37 And because He loved your fathers, [compare. "in love..."] therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power,

38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day.

39 Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

40 You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children

after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

Deuteronomy 7

6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

7 The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

8 but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9 "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

10 and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.

11 Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

12 "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.

13 And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.

14 You shall be blessed above all peoples...

Deuteronomy 10

12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

13 and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

14 Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it.

15 The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.

16 Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.

18 He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.

19 Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

20 You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.

21 He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen.

22 Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.

Deuteronomy 14

1 "You are the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead.

2 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 26

18 Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments,

19 and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."

Conclusion

According to these passages, to which Paul obviously alluded in Ephesians 1, Israel's election was a choice that God made of a specific nation for blessing and for revelation. We will see in the next few verses that it was also a choice that would enable Israel to be a light to the surrounding nations. It was a choice of a nation through whom He would bring salvation to all the families of the earth. It was NOT a selection of individuals to eternal salvation or eternal damnation. Israel was admonished that because they were "elect" they must therefore individually take careful heed to all that God commanded and instructed. If they did not, they would be cut off. They were chosen in order that they should be "holy and without blame," but there was no divine guarantee that they would do so. There is no other concept of election taught in these passages.

Predestination (Part IV)

προορισας ημας ("having predestined us")

The aorist active participle προορισας ("having predestined us") modifies the

verb ἐξελεζατο ("he chose us") and further explains what it means. It implies a determined choice beforehand or in advance. Based on the nature of the verb predestined and of the following modifying phrases, we take this as an ingressive aorist. As defined by Wallace,

The aorist tense may be used to stress the beginning of an action or the entrance into a state. Unlike the ingressive imperfect, there is no implication that the action continues. This simply left unstated. The ingressive aorist is quite common. ⁴

εις υιοθεσιαν (to adoption as sons)

The preposition εις was used in the sense of result. The result of God's predestination of Israel was that they became His children or sons. We have already quoted some of the passages that speak of this result. Note also,

Exodus 4

21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.

22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.

23 So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'"

In addition, in Paul's jargon, **the adoption** pertains to Israel.

Romans 9

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,

*4 **who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;***

5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Gal 4

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

*5 to **redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.***

δια Ιησου Χριστου εις αυτον (through Jesus the Messiah, to himself)

The hope of Israel, the Messiah, was the instrumental means through which God brought Israel near to Himself. Paul states this explicitly in 1 Corinthians 10.

*1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,
2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
3 all ate the same spiritual food,
4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*

κατα την ευδοκιαν του θεληματος αυτου (according to the good pleasure of His will)

The preposition *κατα* ("according to") carries the idea of conformity to a standard. Here, the predestination of Israel to be God's chosen people was according to His good pleasure. Stated simply, it pleased Him to do so.

εις επαινον δοξης της χαριτος αυτου (to the praise of the glory of His grace)

God's predestination of Israel was "unto" the praise of the glory of His grace. The preposition *εις* (to) can have the force of either "purpose" or "result." If it is "result," then this is simply a statement that God's working with the Hebrew nation resulted in the praise of His grace. This is certainly true. In many of the OT passages that speak of God's election of Israel, the author praises God for these gracious works. Note Deuteronomy 4:7-8, 32-39 and 10:12-15 quoted above as well as Psalm 33, 105, 135; Isaiah 43 and countless others. If it is "purpose," then we might take this as a reference to the following passage also found in Deuteronomy 4. This is the interpretation we prefer and this shows how Israel was intended to be a light to the surrounding nations.

5 "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. 6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

Conclusion

God's election of Israel meant that they were predestined to be His children through adoption. This means that they were His children in a covenantal sense,

but not necessarily in the New Birth sense. This predestination was through the Messiah and resulted in the extolling of the glory of His grace.

God's Grace (Part V)

εν η εχαριτωσεν ημας εν τω ηγαπημενω (by which He made us accepted in the one having been beloved)

The word, η ("which"), is the feminine singular relative pronoun referring to "grace" in the preceding clause, which it modifies. The word εχαριτωσεν (made us accepted) is related to the word "grace." Both words have the same root. It is found only twice in the NT and essentially means "to bestow favor on, to favor highly, to bless." The other time it is found is in Gabriel's salutation to the virgin Mary, "Hail, you who are highly favored..." We would not translate Luke 1:28 as, "Hail, you who have been made accepted..." Therefore, we conclude that a better translation of this clause in Ephesians is, "by which He highly favored us."

The title, "the Beloved" (τω ηγαπημενω) is usually understood to refer to Christ by modern commentators. Paul used the perfect passive participle form of "αγαπαο." The significance of this cannot be overstated. The **perfect** participle form adds an important grammatical component, that of tense. The perfect tense indicates a **past completed action** with only the results of the action continuing to the present. Literally, Paul wrote, "**The one having been beloved.**" While Christ is certainly "beloved" by the Father (see: Luke 3:22), there is no **past completed action** of His being "beloved" (as the perfect tense demands), with just the results continuing to the present. The Father's love for the Son has always been constant. If Paul meant Christ, we would expect Him to have used the articular adjective form of "agapao," as in Luke 3:22, "the Beloved One." This would not confine the nature of the love to a past completed event. That Paul instead used a rare form of "agapao" (perfect passive participle) implies that there was a very specific reason. Wallace says,

"As Moulton points out, the perfect tense is 'the most important, exegetically, of all the Greek tenses.' The perfect tense is used less frequently than the present, aorist, future, or imperfect; when it is used, there is usually a deliberate choice on the part of the writer." ⁵

Since the only real difference between the common adjective form and the perfect participle form is the addition of the perfect tense, the logical conclusion is that Paul deliberately wanted to distinguish "the Beloved" in this passage as one **who had been beloved at some point in the past**, with the results of that love extending to the present. Therefore, it seems self-evident that

Paul's use of the perfect participle made it clear to his readers that he was not referring to Christ.

Paul relied heavily on the Greek Old Testament called the Septuagint (LXX) in his quotes of the Old Testament. This is the Bible his readers were familiar with, and could actually read. The Hebrew Scriptures were rare, expensive, and impossible to read for Gentiles. A search of the LXX turns up this exact title. It is an affectionate title for Israel. It refers first to Jacob, whose name God changed to "Israel." And to all his descendants, the 12 tribes of Israel, that came from his loins. This title first appears in Deut. 32:15.

*"So Jacob ate and was filled, and **the one having been beloved** (ο αγαπημενος) kicked; he grew fat, he became thick and broad: then he forsook the God that made him, and departed from God his Saviour" (LXX).*

This title refers specifically to Israel's being "chosen" by God, when He brought them out of Egypt to be a separated nation unto Himself (Israel's election). It was this election of Israel, and separating them unto Himself, that earned this nation the title, "the one having been beloved."

Deut. 33:1-5,26-29

1 ¶ And this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

2 And he said, The Lord is come from Sina, and has appeared from Seir to us, and has hasted out of the mount of Pharan, with the ten thousands of Cades; on his right hand were his angels with him.

3 And he spared his people, and all his sanctified ones are under thy hands; and they are under thee; and he received of his words

4 the law which Moses charged us, an inheritance to the assemblies of Jacob.

*5 And he shall be a prince **in the one having been beloved** (εν τω αγαπημενω), when the princes of the people are gathered together with the tribes of Israel. ...*

*26 ¶ There is not any such as the God of **the one having been beloved** (του αγαπημενου); he who rides upon the heaven is thy helper, and the magnificent One of the firmament.*

27 And the rule of God shall protect thee, and that under the strength of the everlasting arms; and he shall cast forth the enemy from before thy face, saying, Perish.

28 And Israel shall dwell in confidence alone on the land of Jacob, with corn and wine; and the sky shall be misty with dew upon thee.

*29 **Blessed art thou, O Israel;** who is like to thee, O people saved by the Lord? thy helper shall hold his shield over thee, and his sword is thy boast; and thine enemies shall speak falsely to thee, and thou shalt tread upon their neck.*
(LXX)

This is a very significant passage. Not only does it refer to God's bringing Israel out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai to receive His Law, but it is also Moses' prophecy of Israel's future restoration in the coming Kingdom. It is in fact the last words of Moses, as he blessed Israel just before his death.

Notice in verse 5, the entire prepositional phrase that Paul used in Eph. 1:6, appears in Moses' prophecy:

Deut. 33:5 LXX "**in the one having been beloved**" (εν τω ηγαπημενω).
Eph. 1:6 "**in the one having been beloved**" (εν τω ηγαπημενω).

David made a similar prophecy of Israel's eventual restoration, and used the same title for Israel, "*the one having been beloved*" (Ps. 29:6 LXX). That David cited Moses' prophecy sets precedent for quoting Moses' title for Israel, as "*the one having been beloved.*"

Isaiah also prophesied as follows concerning "*the one having been beloved.*"

Isa. 44:1-3

1 ¶ But now hear, Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen.

*2 Thus saith the Lord God that made thee, and he that formed thee from the womb; Thou shalt yet be helped: fear not, my servant Jacob; and **the one having been beloved, Israel** (ο ηγαπημενος, Ισραηλ), whom I have chosen.*

3 For I will give water to the thirsty that walk in a dry land: I will put my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessings upon thy children:

(LXX)

Notice the close association between God's election of Israel (v. 1) and the title, "*the one having been beloved.*" This is significant because Paul made the same association in Eph. 1:3-6. (cf. Jer. 11:15-17,12:1-2 LXX & Rom. 11:15-27).

Paul's use of the perfect participle indicates past completed action, as opposed to ongoing action. Employing the rare perfect participle makes this a quote of Moses' title for Israel, referring to God's love for that nation manifest in His election, particularly when He brought them out of Egypt, separating them as a people unto Himself. This is why AFTER the exodus Moses coined this affectionate

title for Israel, "the one having been beloved." The past completed component refers specifically to that act of God in separating Israel from the Egyptians, bringing them to Mt. Sinai, and giving them His Law to distinguish them from the rest of the nations.

In this commentary on Eph. 1, we have been showing how Paul relied heavily on the Septuagint version of the book of Deuteronomy. It is apparent that, in verses 3-6, Paul depended specifically on Deut. 7:6-8, 13-14. Below we have included a table to aid the reader in a comparison of these two passages. We have color coded the concepts that Paul has drawn from Deut. 7. Note in particular the manner in which God displayed His love to Israel, which we have underlined below.

- **Text in red** refers to God's love for Israel.
- **Text in blue** refers to the election of Israel.
- **Text in orange** refers to the sanctification of Israel.
- **Text in Green** refers to God's blessings upon Israel.

Eph. 1:3-6

3 "Blessed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has **blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [things]** in Christ,
4 since before the foundation of the world **He chose us in Him to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,**
5 Having foreordained us to adoption by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the delight of His will,
6 to praise of the glory of His **grace**, by which He **highly favored us in the one having been beloved.**"

(PFRS Literal translation)

Deut 7:6-8,13-14

6 "For you are **a holy people to the LORD your God;** the LORD **your God has chosen you** to be a people for Himself, **a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.**

7 "The LORD did not **set His love on you** nor **choose you** because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

8 "**but because the LORD loves you,** and **because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ...**

13 "And **He will love you** and **bless you** and multiply you; He will also **bless** the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.

14 "**You shall be blessed above all peoples;** there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock. (NKJ)

The meaning of "grace" is unmerited favor. That is the epitome of what Moses said about Israel in this passage. The clause, "**highly favored us**" [in the one having been beloved], is a Greek word that only appears one other place in Scripture, in Gabriel's salutation of Mary, the one "highly favored" of God. The sense is clearly that of being **favored above all others**. And that is precisely what Moses said of Israel in Deut. 7:6 & 14.

Also, notice in Deut. 7:8 the mention of God's bestowing His grace on Israel on account of **THE OATH** he swore to the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What is that "oath?"

Gen. 22:16-18

16 I have sworn by myself, says the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and on my account hast not spared thy beloved son,

17 surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is by the shore of the sea, and thy seed shall inherit the cities of their enemies.

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast hearkened to my voice.

(LXX)

This oath was the confirming of a prior promise God made to Abraham, regarding making of his seed a great nation. That promise also included the following prophecy.

Gen 15:13-14

13 And it was said to Abram, Thou shalt surely know that thy seed shall be a sojourner in a land not their own, and they shall enslave them, and afflict them, and humble them four hundred years.

14 And the nation whomsoever they shall serve I will judge; and after this, they shall come forth hither with much property.

(LXX)

God promised to separate Abraham's seed from Egypt. It was only after He had done so, through Moses, that Moses coined the term, "*the one having been beloved,*" pointing to God's fulfilling this promise to Abraham. That is why the perfect tense appears in Moses' affectionate title for Israel, and why it also appears in Paul's quotation of Moses in Eph. 1:6.

Paul's entire statement in verse 6, "*to praise of the glory of His grace by which He highly favored us in 'the one having been beloved,'*" points to God's past grace upon His people Israel, having chosen them, and separated them unto Himself.

εν ω εχομεν την απολυτρωσιν την αφεσιν (= των παραπτωματων) (in whom we have the redemption (the forgiveness of sins))

The phrase "εν ω," meaning "in (or by) whom" refers back to "Jesus Christ" in verse 5.

We also take the phrase "την αφεσιν των παραπτωματων" ("the forgiveness of sins") as standing in apposition to "εν ω εχομεν την απολυτρωσιν" ("in whom we have the redemption"). Thus, the redemption is defined by the forgiveness of sins. The definite article with redemption refers to the redemption so often promised to Israel in the Old Testament and prefigured in all of the sacrifices.

Observe also that throughout verses 3-12, all of the verbs are aorist, past tense referring to the blessings of Israel throughout her history in the Old Testament. The only present tense verb in this section is this verb "we have" referring to the present possession of the redemption through His blood. This is further confirmation that the things Paul is listing are things that he considered to be in the past.

δια του αιματος αυτου κατα τον πλουτον της χαριτος αυτου (through His blood, according to the riches of His grace)

The redemption of Israel is definitively stated to be through the blood of the Messiah in contrast to the sacrifice of bulls and goats according to the Law, (Isa. 53). It is also stated to be according to, or in keeping with, the standard of the riches of His grace. The pronoun "his" could be taken as a reference to "God the Father," or to "Jesus Christ." It is impossible to tell grammatically. But we also think that it is not necessary to make any such distinction since the attribute of grace belongs equally to all three Persons of the Godhead.

Conclusion

In verses 6-7, Paul seems to have contrasted the former grace of God upon Israel with the latter and better grace. In verse 6, Paul refers to God's having delivered them from bondage in Egypt, separating them as a people unto Himself, with this statement, "*to praise of the glory of His grace by which He highly favored us in 'the one having been beloved'.*" But, the greater "grace" is to be found in what follows in verse 7, the redemption through the blood of the Messiah, which Paul here called, "*the riches of His grace.*"

The Mystery of His Will (Part VI)

ης επερισσευσεν εις ημας εν παση σοφια και ψρονησει (which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence {understanding - NIV})

The word "ης" ("which") is a genitive, feminine, singular pronoun whose antecedent is *χαριτος* ("grace") in the preceding clause. What does it mean that God's grace was made to abound toward Israel "in all wisdom and understanding"? We take this as an allusion to the following passage in Deuteronomy 4. (It is highly significant that the majority of the allusions we have identified have come from the first ten chapters of Deuteronomy, especially chapters 4, 7, and 10.)

5 "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.

6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is **your wisdom and your understanding** in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

In this passage, "wisdom and understanding" refers to the written Torah that Israel was commanded to learn and keep. That is, "wisdom and understanding" is a reference to the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

γνωρισας ημιν το μυστηριον του θεληματος αυτου (having made known to us the mystery of His will)

The aorist active participle "γνωρισας" ("having made known") modifies the verb "επερισσευσεν" ("made to abound"). In other words, when we ask "how did God make his grace abound toward Israel in all wisdom and understanding?" The answer that comes back is that He did so "by making known to them the mystery of His will." Thus, we have here in verses 8 and 9 two allusions to the Old Testament Scriptures, "wisdom and understanding" and "the mystery of His will." This is again alluded to in Daniel 2 (LXX).

Daniel 2

19 Then **the mystery** [το μυστηριον] was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night; and Daniel blessed the God of heaven, and said,

20 May the name of God be blessed from everlasting and to everlasting: for **wisdom and understanding** [σοφια και φρονησει] are his.

21 And he changes times and seasons: he appoints kings, and removes them, giving **wisdom** [σοφιον] to the wise, and **prudence** [φρονησιν] to them that have understanding:

22 he reveals deep and secret matters; knowing what is in darkness, and the light is with him.

(LXX)

Eph 1:8-9

8 which He made to abound toward us in all **wisdom and prudence** [σοφια και φρονησει],

9 having made known to us the mystery [το μυστηριον] of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.

Regarding this "mystery," Tim Warner explains,

"In hindsight, through the revelation of Jesus, we can perceive Messianic prophecies interwoven all throughout the Old Testament. Some are fairly plain, like Isaiah 53 (but not altogether, since Philip had to explain to the Ethiopian Eunuch what Isaiah was writing about). Others are quite obscure, like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 7:14. Some are seen in types, such as the sacrifices all being allegories of Christ. Others appear to combine Christ's first and second comings into one. Yet, to those willing to believe, the big picture comes clearly into focus through revelation, as we stand amazed at the flood of prophecy of Christ in the Old Testament. To the carnal minds, with a veil over their eyes, the Torah's and the Prophets' testimony to Christ remain hidden out of sight. That Jesus is the Messiah cannot be proven from the normal grammatical/historical approach to Old Testament prophecy. But, to those who have ears to hear, the evidence is overwhelming.

This is the 'mystery' that Paul speaks of so often in his epistles. Some claim that it was unique to Paul. Nothing in the Scriptures hints at such a thing. In fact, Paul plainly said that the Mystery was revealed to the 'Apostles' (plural), (Eph. 3:5).

John the Baptist was the first to shed some light on the Mystery, when he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," making the connection between Jesus and Isaiah 53. Jesus gave further revelation to His disciples, through personal instruction, and explaining the parables. But, not until after the resurrection did He open their understanding so they could understand the Scriptures, and expound every single prophecy in the Old Testament concerning His coming. From this point on, the Apostles were able to connect the Old Testament prophecies with Jesus' first coming. Peter's sermons in Acts 2 and Acts 3 are filled with these kinds of interpretations of Old Testament prophecy." ⁶

κατα την ευδοκιαν αυτου (according to His purpose)

The word ευδοκιαν can mean "purpose (will)" or "delight." If it is "delight" in this prepositional phrase, then it means simply that it delighted or pleased God to

give this revelation to Israel. Even though their understanding of it was incomplete until the granting of more revelation after the resurrection of the Messiah. He delighted in leading Israel through the ages to a more complete revelation.

We prefer the meaning of “purpose” or “will” in light of the subsequent phrases however. God had a definite purpose in choosing Israel and granting her the knowledge of the mystery of His will as Paul goes on to explain.

ην προεθετο εν αυτω (which He purposed in Himself)

The word ην (“which”) is a relative pronoun whose antecedent is eudokian (“purpose”) in the preceding clause. As we are tracing the thought flow, God made known to Israel the mystery of His will according to His will, which purposed in Himself.

The phrase εν αυτω can be translated reflexively as it is here or as “by Him” as a reference to the Messiah. Both thoughts are valid exegetically and theologically, but we prefer the latter as fitting better with the context and the thought flow where Paul is continually speaking of the things that God has accomplished with, by, and through the Messiah.

εις οικονομιαν του πληρωματος των καιρων (in the dispensation of the fullness of the times)

This prepositional phrase modifies the verb “which He purposed” in verse nine. We take the preposition in a referential sense. That is, God purposed (in the ages past) this with reference to the present age or dispensation.

ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι τα παντα (= τα επι τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης) εν τω Χριστω (= εν αυτω) that He might gather together in one all things (=both which are in heaven and which are on earth) in Christ (= in Him)

Verse 10 is challenging to translators and grammarians. It is greatly simplified (in our opinion) by recognizing that there are four phrases which are easily reduced to two by understanding that two of them stand in apposition to the other two as we have diagrammed them. The phrase “both which are in heaven and which are on earth” stands in apposition to “all things.” The phrase, “in Him” stands in apposition to “in Christ.” This relationship is perfectly natural and makes the construction extraordinarily simple. The “purpose which He purposed in

Himself" is defined by this infinitive phrase, "that He might gather together in one all things in Christ."

The purpose of God, which He revealed to Israel in mystery form in the Old Testament Scriptures, is that He would ultimately gather together in one all things in the Messiah. This gathering together into one is spoken of repeatedly throughout the Book of Ephesians. Out of Jew and Gentile, God has created one people. This is "His workmanship" (2:10), "one new man" (2:14), "one body" (2:16), "the household of God" (2:19), "the whole building" (2:21), "a holy temple" (2:21), "a dwelling place of God" (2:22), "the church" (3:10) etc...

Conclusion

In blessing Israel, God gave her the Scriptures of the Old Testament. These Scripture were Israel's wisdom and understanding. She had no other. Nor did she need any other. Within those pages was concealed the mystery of His Will, an eternal purpose according to which He would ultimately gather together both Jew and Gentile in the Messiah.

The Inheritance (Part VII)

εν ω και εκληρωθημεν (in whom we have also received an inheritance)

The antecedent of "in whom" is "Christ." The word εκληρωθημεν ("received an inheritance") comes from κληρος which means "a lot." So a more literal translation of the word would be, "to assign a portion of land by lot." According to the Scriptures, Israel has received an inheritance. That inheritance is the Land of Canaan, which will be divided by lot among the descendants of Jacob after the return of the Messiah (Dan 12:13).

προορισθεντες (being predestined)

The aorist active participle "being predestined" modifies the aorist passive indicative verb, "obtained an inheritance." Israel is predestined to obtain the Land of Canaan in the Messianic Kingdom. There are two prepositional phrases that modify προορισθεντες.

κατα προθεσιν του τα παντα ενεργουντος κατα την βουλην του θεληματος αυτου (according to the purpose of Him who works all things according the good pleasure of His will)

God's predestination of Israel to inherit Canaan is according to His purpose and according to the good pleasure of His will. The term "all things" does not mean

that God is the cause or the force behind everything that happens in the universe. Such an interpretation, although it is common, expressly makes God the author of sin. "All things" is limited in scope to those things that directly bear on His eternal purpose as described in this passage.

**εις το ειναι ημας (= τους προηλπικοτας εν τω Χριστω)
εις επαινον δοξης αυτου (that we (=who first hoped in the Messiah) should be
to the praise of His glory)**

"We" is in apposition to "who first hoped in the Messiah." This is not "trusted in Christ" in the evangelical sense. It is "hoped before in the Messiah." The prefix pro ("before") affixed to "hoped" connotes the Messianic hope of the Jews before the first advent of the Messiah.

Paul now abruptly transitions to a discussion of the relationship of Gentiles to this story of redemption.

Conclusion

In His blessing of Israel, God promised her an inheritance that includes eternal possession of the Land of Canaan. Paul confirms in this passage that God's promises have not been nullified by the advent of Christ. Those who before hoped in the Messiah will not be disappointed.

The Gentiles (Part VIII)

εν ω και υμεις (in whom you also)

"In whom" refers to "the Messiah" in verse 12. "You also" refers to Gentile believers in general and the Ephesians in particular. The word "trusted" supplied in some English translations is not in the text. It is not only unnecessary; it interrupts the flow and disrupts the sense.

This phrase is modified by the twin participles ακουσαντες ("having heard") and πιστευσαντες ("having believed") which we will treat together.

**ακουσαντες τον λογον της αληθειας (= το ευαγγελιον της σωτηριας υμων)
(having heard the word of truth (= the Gospel of your salvation))
εν ω και πιστευσαντες (in whom also having believed)**

These are aorist active participles governed by the aorist passive indicative verb "you were sealed" in the end of the verse. The combination of "hearing" and

“believing” results in salvation in many passages. (John 5:24; Acts 4:4; 13:48; 15:7; 18:8; Romans 10; Galatians 3:2, 5; Heb 4:2)

The “word of truth” stands in apposition to “the Gospel of your salvation.” Notice that the word of truth, which concealed the mystery and which contained Israel’s hope, has now become “the Gospel of your salvation.”

εσφραγισθητε τω Πνευματι της επαγγελιας τω Αγιω (you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the Promise)

The verb “you were sealed” is an aorist passive indicative. Regarding this verb, Robertson says it is an old verb meaning to set a seal on one as a mark or stamp of ownership; marked and authenticated as God’s heritage. ⁷ Gentiles who have responded to the Gospel are not usurpers of Israel’s blessing or stowaways on the vessel of her promises. We have been marked and authenticated as legitimate recipients of God’s blessings by the Holy Spirit. Historically speaking, this was not merely a theoretical abstraction but became visible and audible proof to all in Acts 10 that God had poured out His blessing and promise on the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Notice that the word “promise” has the definite article. It is “THE promise” of the Holy Spirit referring to a specific promise. This refers to the Holy Spirit that was announced by promise in the Old Testament Scriptures in Joel 2:28; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 32:15; 44:3 and others. Note also John 7:39; Acts 1:4-8, and Gal 3:14.

ος εστιν αρραβων της κληρονομιας ημων εις απολυτρωσιν της περιποιησεως εις επαινον της δοξης αυτου (who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory)

This is one of the many passages that state that Gentiles, along with Jews, will receive an inheritance in the Messianic Kingdom. Our inheritance will not be in the Land of Canaan, which is Israel’s inheritance. But the Kingdom of the Messiah will cover the whole earth. We can therefore expect our eternal inheritance somewhere on the restored earth outside the borders of Canaan.

The Holy Spirit who indwells us is the guarantee of our inheritance. We take εις in a temporal sense. The Spirit is our guarantee until the second coming of Christ.

Notice that this grace of God toward the Gentiles culminates in exactly the same place that it does for the Jews: “to the praise of His glory.”

Conclusion

Paul has not only affirmed Israel’s promised inheritance. He has also stated that

we Gentiles also have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Thus Jew and Gentile both have a common hope, even as they have been joined together as "one new man."

Theological Implications and Observations (Part IX)

Because there is a demonstrable distinction in pronouns in Ephesians 1:3-14 that is explainable as applying to Jews living before the advent of Christ on one hand and to Gentile believers living in the present age, it is an exegetical fallacy to assume a priori that Paul included his readers in the statements in verses 3-12. Reformed commentators universally do this. For example Calvin says this in his commentary on Ephesians at verse three:

*"The lofty terms in which he extols the grace of God toward the Ephesians, are intended to rouse their hearts to gratitude, to set them all on flame, to fill them even to overflowing with this thought... The design of the apostle, therefore, in asserting the riches of divine grace toward the Ephesians, was to protect them against having their faith shaken by the false apostles..."*⁸

Thus, Calvin gives no indication that he considered the change in pronouns worth notice. The majority of those who have followed him theologically, follow his precedent. This is to be expected from Reformed theologians, for to them, no distinction exists between the two groups. But Dispensationalists, who do believe in a distinction, ought to be more judicious in their handling of the text rather than simply following the precedents set by Reformed writers.

John Gill, a Reformed Baptist, makes no notice of the change between verses 3-12 and verse 13. He does make a distinction between two groups in the passage, but it is not an exegetical distinction inasmuch as it is not based on the pronouns or any other textual indicator. It is a theological distinction, between "the elect" and "the non-elect," that assumes a priori the doctrine he intends to prove from the passage. This is not only an exegetical fallacy but a logical one as well. He commits the logical fallacy of *petitio principii* (also known as "begging the question" or "circular reasoning"). He says "us" includes all of the "elect" (in the Calvinist sense of election) and therefore the passage teaches Calvinism. But how does he know the passage teaches Calvinism? Because "us" includes all of the "elect." Here is Gill's comment on verse three.

"God is the author and giver of all blessings; and he blesses his people with them, as he is the God and Father of Christ, and as he is their covenant God and Father in Christ; and he only can bless; if he blesses not, none can; and if he blesses, they are blessed indeed: the "us" that are blessed, are such who deserve, according to the tenor of the law, to be cursed;

and are not all men, but some distinct from others; and who are before described as saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus; and include both Jews and Gentiles, who belong to the election of grace." ⁹

Jamieson, Faucett and Brown observe the change in pronouns and correctly state that the distinction is between Jews and Gentiles, but this observation has no meaningful effect on their exposition inasmuch as they treat verses 3-12 as pertaining to both the Jews and Paul's Gentile readers. ³ The same is true of Robertson. ⁷

Any interpretation of this passage that fails to observe the distinction in the pronouns is a non-literal interpretation. Furthermore, failure to observe this initial distinction, and consequently to include in verses 3-12 all of the redeemed, forces one to ignore the many Old Testament allusions and to treat the entire passage in a non-literal fashion.

For example, regarding the phrase, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," we have demonstrated how these terms applied to Israel and how they are being alluded to by Paul. But here is how Calvin treats these statements:

"I have no objection to Chrysostom's remark, that the word spiritual conveys an implied contrast between the blessing of Moses and of Christ. The law had its blessings; but in Christ only is perfection found, because he gives us a perfect revelation of the kingdom of God, which leads us directly to heaven. When the body itself is presented to us, figures are no longer needed.

Whether we understand the meaning to be, in heavenly Places, or in heavenly Benefits, is of little consequence. All that was intended to be expressed is the superiority of that grace which we receive through Christ. The happiness which it bestows is not in this world, but in heaven and everlasting life. In the Christian religion, indeed, as we are elsewhere taught, (1 Timothy 4:8), is contained the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" but its aim is spiritual happiness, for the kingdom of Christ is spiritual. A contrast is drawn between Christ and all the Jewish emblems, by which the blessing under the law was conveyed; for where Christ is, all those things are superfluous." ⁸

Calvin seems to be implicitly acknowledging that Paul is making reference in these verses to Israel's blessings in the Old Testament. But his [Calvin's] disposition toward those blessings is one of contempt. To him, all the "blessings" and promises that were in the Old Testament are done away with in the New. The earthly kingdom is replaced with heaven. The chosen nation of Israel is replaced with the church. To Calvin, all those old so-called "blessings" are now

“superfluous.” If this was really Paul's disposition toward Israel's blessings enumerated in the Old Testament, then why did Paul say in chapter 2,

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

This is another allusion to the early chapters in Deuteronomy, specifically to Deuteronomy 4 and 13:

4:7 “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?”

13:6 “If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers,

7 of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth,

8 you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him...

Reformed theologians of course do the same thing with Israel's inheritance, mentioned in verse 11 that they do with the kingdom and with the nation itself. It is all allegorized. Nevertheless, Calvin seems compelled in verse 11 (perhaps under the weight of so much Old Testament Scriptural allusion) to finally take some notice of the reference to Old Testament Israel. Regarding the inheritance in verse 11 he says,

“Hitherto he has spoken generally of all the elect; he now begins to take notice of separate classes. When he says, WE have obtained, he speaks of himself and of the Jews, or, perhaps more correctly, of all who were the first fruits of Christianity; and afterwards he comes to the Ephesians. It tended not a little to confirm the faith of the Ephesian converts, that he associated them with himself and the other believers, who might be said to be the first-born in the church. As if he had said, “The condition of all godly persons is the same with yours; for we who were first called by God owe our acceptance to his eternal election.” Thus, he shews, that from first to last, all have obtained salvation by free grace, because they have been freely adopted according to eternal election.”⁸

While this acknowledges, for the first time in the passage, that Paul meant Jews in verse 11 when he said “WE,” it is much too little and much too late to salvage his exegesis. He does not even acknowledge that Israel’s inheritance is everywhere in Scripture spoken of as being the land of Canaan. He simply dismisses all of that in favor of his “heavenly destiny” view imposed on the passage.

With this, we would like to offer some final conclusions based on the exegesis and on the theological discussion.

Final Conclusions (Part X)

1. In Ephesians 1:3-12, Paul was highlighting aspects of God’s historic and redemptive dealings with the Hebrew nation. All of the truths stated in these verses are historically significant to that nation. Gentiles are nowhere included in these verses.

2. The historical significance of these truths has been demonstrated through grammatical exegesis and Scriptural allusions. The majority of these allusions are found in the first half of the Book of Deuteronomy, particularly chapters 4, 7, 10, 11 and 13. Others are found in Genesis and in the Prophetic Books. Thus, the Old Testament Scriptures, specifically the Book of Deuteronomy and the Prophets is the historical and theological foundation of Ephesians 1:3-12. It is impossible to rightly interpret it without understanding this fact.

3. The “election” spoken of in Deuteronomy and alluded to in Ephesians was not a selection of individuals to eternal salvation or eternal damnation. It was the selection of a nation to be the special recipient of God’s blessings and through which He would bring the offer of salvation to the entire world. Furthermore, this election did not guarantee its intended result. That is, Israel was chosen in order that she should be “holy and without blame” and she was constantly exhorted to obedience in view of her election. But this intended result was not fulfilled among the majority of the nation. If the Calvinistic doctrine of election is true, then it must be found somewhere other than Ephesians 1.

4. Beginning with verse 13, Paul takes up the issue of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Gospel of the Messiah. Beginning here, the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the Gospel is the major theme of the Book.

5. The Reformed interpretation of Ephesians 1:3-14 is based on non-literal interpretation. It is relatively self-consistent. The Traditional Dispensational and Calvinistic interpretation generally follows the Reformed precedent, but because it maintains a literal kingdom with a literal Israel and a literal inheritance, it is based on a mixture of literal and non-literal interpretation and is

therefore less self-consistent. The only way to correctly interpret the passage is by a consistently literal hermeneutic that takes into account the distinction in personal pronouns and the Old Testament foundation.

Footnotes

1. Wallace, Daniel B. Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, Zondervan, 1996.
2. Vincent, Marvin R. Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Hendrickson Publishers
3. Jamieson, Faucet and Brown, Critical Commentary and Explanatory on the Whole Bible
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5. *ibid*, p. 573
6. Warner, Tim "Progressive Dispensationalism – The Mystery Revealed" Post-Trib Research Center 2002
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8. Calvin, John. Commentary on the Book of Ephesians, Public Domain
9. Gill, John. John Gill's Exposition of the Bible, Public Domain