

Ephesians Week 3 TDs

1. Divide the Middle into its major sections.

Book 2 of *Inkblotitis* sets forth the following “Ten Rules of Good Bible Reading”:

1. Read the whole book, preferably several times.
2. View the verses in book-level focus.
3. Discover the shape of the text.
4. Highlight recurring words and ideas.
5. Appreciate the differences of genre.
6. Tune in to the historical setting.
7. Use commentaries and other study tools with discretion.
8. Digest your experiences in the word.
9. Live what you’ve learned.
10. Do it again.

In Week 1 of our study, we started working on Rule #3: “Discover the shape of the text.” To do this thoroughly, I suggest 4 steps:

- Step 1: Find the Introduction and the Conclusion.
- Step 2: Divide the Middle into its major sections.
- Step 3: Look at how the sections are connected.
- Step 4: Determine the purpose of the sections.

We’re not going to go through all of these steps now (we’ll be doing these sorts of things as we look more closely at the various sections of the letter), but as part of our effort to get a feel for the overall shape of Ephesians, see if you can produce a tentative outline of the book—not a detailed outline, but only of the major sections. In other words, “Divide the Middle into its major sections.”

But how? That seems pretty hard, doesn’t it? Well, it might not be as hard as you think. You’ve already read Ephesians several times, you already know the Introduction and the Conclusion, and you know that a major Transition occurs in 3:14-21 (if you read the “Extra, Extra” part of Week 1). So all you have to do is see if the first half of the Middle and the last half of the Middle have any major transitions or thematic changes. For now, let’s focus on the first half.

Expanding the 3-Part Shape

Here’s what you already know (or something similar):

Introduction: 1:1-23

Middle 2:1-3:21

Transition: 3:14-21

Middle: 4:1-6:9

Conclusion: 6:10-24

So the question is, are there any major divisions or subject changes in 2:1-3:13 and in 4:1-6:9? For the moment, focus on 2:1-3:13.

How would you divide Ephesians 2:1-3:13? What (literary or grammatical clues) did you use to separate the major sections?

2. Explore Eph 2:1-10.

Does 2:1-10 constitute its own section? Why? What distinguishes it and how does it transition to what follows?

Color/Highlight key words and phrases (in connection with your work on the Introduction).

What are the major themes of 2:1-10? Are there any thematic (key words and phrases) connections with 1:3-14 and/or 1:15-23? (The previous step should obviously help with this.)

In a brief paragraph (or to yourself), summarize the content of 2:1-10.

3. How Does 2:1-10 Fit/Function in the Book of Ephesians?

This is an important question in understanding any passage of scripture (I call it “The Question” in *Inkblotitis*.) Like an individual piece of an assembled jigsaw puzzle, if you understand how a verse or group of verses “fits” into the book as a whole—what role it plays—then you can be much more confident that you understand what it means.

Step 4 of Rule #3, “Discover the shape of the text,” is to “Determine the purpose of the sections.” Coming to see how a passage of scripture fits and functions within the context of the book as a whole is a vital part of interpreting the verses within their book-level context. Answering the “how-does-it-fit” question is, however, sometimes difficult when working through a book and only becomes clear in retrospect. I call this the “Summit Access View” (as part of “Summit Access Bible Reading”—SABR) or “View from the Summit.” This is why we start by reading the book as a whole; nevertheless, it can take time for the role of each section to become apparent. The function or purpose of each section is thus something we want to come back to again and again as we study a Bible book.

Clue

What did Paul want the recipients of this letter to come to understand? Did he pray for something in particular? That “the eyes of their hearts might be opened,” so that they could come to understand some things? Did he articulate any of those things in the Introduction that might serve as specific subjects? Check out the ideas expressed in 1:18-19:

- the hope of his calling
- the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints

- the surpassing greatness of his power upon us who believe

How does Eph 2:1-10 relate to the material in the Introduction of Ephesians?

4. Explore Eph 2:11-22.

Does 2:11-12 constitute its own section? What distinguishes it and how does it transition to what follows? How does it connect to 2:1-10.

Color/Highlight key words and phrases (in connection with your work on the Introduction and 2:1-10).

What are the major themes of 2:11-22? Are there any thematic (key ideas, words and phrases) connections with 1:3-14 and/or 1:15-23?

In a brief paragraph (or to yourself), summarize the content of 2:11-22.

5. How Does 2:11-22 Fit/Function in the Book of Ephesians?

How does Eph 2:11-12 relate to what precedes and to what follows? How does it relate to Paul's prayer and thematic outline of 1:18-19? (And we'll ask how it relates to chapter 4 again later.)

Expert's Corner

Key Questions Review

Ephesians 2:1-10

- With what brief phrase (as if giving it a header) would you summarize the content of 2:1-10?
- Describe the before, the it/event, and the after? What would the audience be without it?
- Who is the subject of the paragraph ("you"), and what is the result of the grace of God upon "us"?
- Why is it important for the audience to understand God's grace in a way that promotes humility before God and the recognition of his hand in saving/shaping us for good works?

Ephesians 2:11-22

- Summarize (as if giving it a header) Eph 2:11-22 with a brief phrase.
- Why do you think there is a need to portray the division between Jews and Gentiles and to focus on the creation of peace in Christ?
- What/Where would the audience be without it?
- What is the will/desire of Christ regarding Jews and Gentiles in the church? Why the emphasis on peace as the creation and will of Christ? And why mention "the foundation of apostles and prophets"?

Sample Highlighting of Chapter 2

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once **walked**, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at **work** in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once **lived** in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in **mercy**, because of **the great love with which he loved** us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together** with Christ—by **grace** you have been **saved**— ⁶and **raised us up** with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the **immeasurable riches** of his **grace** in **kindness** toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by **grace** you have been **saved** through **faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift** of God, ⁹not a result of **works**, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his **workmanship, created** in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God **prepared beforehand**, that we should **walk** in them.

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no **hope** and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our **peace**, who has made us **both one** and has broken down in his flesh **the dividing wall of hostility** ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might **create** in himself **one new man** in place of the **two**, so making **peace**, ¹⁶and might **reconcile** us **both** to God in **one** body through the cross, thereby killing **the hostility**. ¹⁷And he came and preached **peace** to you who were far off and **peace** to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we **both** have access in **one** Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God**, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom **the whole structure, being joined together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being **built together into a dwelling place** for God by the Spirit.