

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Amos 7:7-15

7 This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the LORD said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said, “Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; 9 the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.” 10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.” 12 And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, 13 but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.” 14 Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. 15 But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’

7:7-15 In order to see that Gospel in God's call to Amos, it is important to remember God's reason in sending him to speak: even at this late date, God still desires that his people repent and that he may heal them with forgiveness. Toward this end, God's heart is revealed in the verses immediately prior to our pericope. Twice in 7:1–6, God declares impending punishment, and twice he relents. Only when Israel refuses to acknowledge that it is “small” (7:2, 5) before him does God's judgment become final. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:7 Israel is compared to a wall built true to plumb—what she should have been, after all the Lord had done for her. (CSB)

7:8–9 In vv. 1–6 God proposed wholesale punishments amounting to total destruction, but relented at Amos's prayer—though without promise of forgiveness. Now the Lord is no longer open to such intercession (cf. Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1). (CSB)

Israel. The context makes clear that this refers to the Northern Kingdom, Israel (see also v 10), and not to the entire people of Israel, God's chosen people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:7–8 *the Lord was standing*. The Lord revealed Himself to Amos in physical fashion during this series of visions. (TLSB)

plumb line. Builder's tool used to determine a straight, vertical line. In this comparison, the wall represents Israel. Though the Lord originally set up Israel to be right and true, the nation has become crooked and warped. Israel needs to be re-measured by the Lord's plumb line, since only then can things be set right. (TLSB)

7:8 *plumb line*. God's people had been “built” (v. 7) according to God's standards. They were expected to be true to those standards, but were completely out of plumb when tested (cf. 2Ki 21:13). (CSB)

'anak, a plumb line. The word is used only in these two verses in Amos. Nevertheless, there is no difficulty in the translation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

my people. Here, for the first time in the book of Amos, the Lord calls Israel “my people” (see v. 15; 8:2; 9:10, 14). (CSB)

I will never again pass by them. He was determined not to show lenience any longer. (Kretzmann)

7:9 *high places ... sanctuaries ... house*. The centers of religious and political pretension and of self-righteous pride would be wiped out. (CSB)

Worship sites scattered around the Northern Kingdom. (TLSB)

Isaac. Israel’s (Jacob’s) father, a way of referring to Israel found only in Amos (see v. 16). (CSB)

Likely references to Bethel and Dan. See notes, 3:14, 15; 4:4–5. Through Moses, the Lord had warned the people about the consequences of illicit worship (Lv 26:27–33). (TLSB)

Jeroboam. The oracles of chs. 1–6 were spoken to the leading people of Israel and Samaria as a whole; here Amos names one man, the king. (CSB)

Prophecy reveals that the breakaway dynastic line of the Northern Kingdom would be ended by invading enemies. Historically, this was fulfilled when Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, was assassinated. (TLSB)

7:1–9 By means of symbolic visions involving locusts, fire, and a plumb line, the Lord warns His people that He will punish their apostasy. However, these visions, Amos’s repeated intercessions on behalf of the people, and God’s forbearance did not result in repentance. People today are just as slow to heed God’s Word and are equally intractable in their bad behavior. We, too, would be irretrievably lost and eternally condemned were it not for Christ and His forgiveness. • “Grant us, O Father, that we may also be Your heavenly children. Teach us to think only of our souls and of our heavenly inheritance that our temporal fatherland and earthly lot may not deceive, hold, and hinder us or turn us altogether into children of this world, that we may say with a good and real reason, ‘Our *heavenly* Father,’ and may truly be Your heavenly children. Amen.” (Luth, *TLWA*, p 294) (TLSB)

7:10,13 Bethel, a town near the southern border of the Northern Kingdom. Here, Jeroboam I had built a new sanctuary after the split from Judah, so that the people of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) would not have to go to Jerusalem (in Judah, the Southern Kingdom) to worship. The non-Levitical priests in charge of this temple quickly fell into Baalism. The Jeroboam mentioned in this text is Jeroboam II, who reigned in the first half of the eighth century BC. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:10 Amaziah’s words summarize Amos’s message. (CSB)

Amaziah the priest is slandering Amos. He takes what Amos has to say and changes it slightly (compare verses 9 and 11). (CSB)

Priest of Jeroboam’s sanctuary at Bethel. (TLSB)

priest of Bethel. This expression was found on a seal from a temple to Yahweh at Dor. (TLSB)

conspired. Amaziah charges Amos with inciting insurrection and so overthrowing the dynasty ruling Israel. Apparently, Amos's message was getting through, for Amaziah protests that the land "is not able to bear all his words." (TLSB)

Jeroboam. That is, his "house" (v. 9), the king's name also representing his dynasty. (CSB)

7:11 *will die.* Jeroboam died naturally (2Ki 14:29), but his son and successor Zechariah (2Ki 15:8) was assassinated (2Ki 15:10). (CSB)

Jeroboam shall die by the sword. Amaziah probably refers to the oracle appearing in v 9. (TLSB)

exile. Amos clearly threatened the nation with this punishment many times (4:2–3; 5:5, 26–27; 6:7; 9:4). (TLSB)

7:12 *seer.* Amaziah dismissed Amos as a prophet for hire whom he need not take seriously. (CSB)

Underlines the visionary nature of the oracles in vv 7–9. By calling Amos a "seer," Amaziah implicitly recognizes his prophetic gift. (TLSB)

Amaziah and Amos should have been partners because they both were to represent the Lord. A seer was sometimes called a star gazer and not someone to be taken seriously. Seers were often hired to tell what kings and others wanted to hear. (CSB)

GO BACK TO THE LAND OF JUDAH – Amaziah indirectly threatens Amos by commanding him to go back to where he came from (cf 1:1). (TLSB)

"Flee away to the land of Judah." Amos was from the town of Tekoa (1:1), a town south of Bethlehem, in the Southern Kingdom. He had gone to the north, to Israel, to prophesy in response to God's call (v 15). These words of Amaziah then mean, "Go back to where you came from." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:13 *never again prophesy at Bethel.* Amaziah stops short of forbidding Amos from prophesying altogether. Instead, he forbids Amos from preaching in territories ruled by Jeroboam; he cannot deny that Amos is a true prophet. (TLSB)

king's sanctuary. Amaziah served the king in Samaria, not Israel's heavenly King; hence he would not allow a prophetic word to be spoken against Jeroboam or his realm at the royal chapel. (CSB)

a temple of the kingdom. Amaziah makes Bethel the "king's sanctuary" rather than the Lord's house. (TLSB)

The chief place for the cult ordained by the king for his entire kingdom. His argument was that for this reason it was altogether improper for Amos to continue his threatening sayings. (Kretzmann)

7:14 *a prophet nor a prophet's son.* Amos denied any previous connection with the prophets or their disciples (see note on 1Ki 20:35). No one had hired him to come and announce judgment on Jeroboam and Israel. (CSB)

Amos became a prophet in the same way as so many others—apart from his own initiative or will. Many of Israel's prophets resisted and tried to get out of their calls when the Lord unexpectedly came to them with a charge for mission (Ex 3:1–4:17; Is 6:1–7; Jer 1:4–10; Jnh 1:1–3). The OT contains no account about a true prophet taking the task upon himself. Gregory of Nazianzus: "None can see or enter into the

Kingdom, except he be born again of the Spirit, and be cleansed from the first birth ... by which every one singly is created anew. This Spirit, for He is most wise and most loving, if He takes possession of a shepherd makes him a Psalmist ... if he possess a goatherd[er] and scraper of sycamore fruit, He makes him a Prophet” (NPNF 2 7:384). (TLSB)

“I was no prophet . . . but I was a herdsman.” ESV has the footnote “or am.” The two clauses are verbless in Hebrew, therefore not giving (grammatically) the tense. S In the next verse, however, Amos says God “took” (clearly past tense) him from following the flock and told him to “prophesy.” Since God told Amos to prophesy, it seems impossible for him to say that he is no prophet. The main text of the ESV is preferable. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

He was not born to that honor nor did he attend any school of the prophets. (Kretzmann)

herdsman. The Hebrew uses a different word here—one not found elsewhere in OT. The Hebrew for this word is, however, related to a word for “cattle,” suggesting that Amos may also have tended cattle. (CSB)

sycamore figs. A large tree, yielding fig-like fruit as well as useful timber. To ensure good fruit, the gardener had to slit the top of each fig—which may be the procedure referred to by the obscure Hebrew word here rendered “took care of.” (CSB)

Amos readily admits he was not originally a prophet, nor did he come from a family or school of prophets (cf 1Sm 19:19–24; 2Ki 2:1–22). Rather, he engaged in an agricultural vocation, both as a herdsman and as one who scraped the fruit of fig trees in order to hasten their ripening (still practiced today). (TLSB)

7:15 *following.* The Hebrew for which stresses the location of the shepherd rather than his activity. (CSB)

the LORD took me. Cf 2Sm 7:8, David’s call. (TLSB)

Go. Amos was in Bethel because God had sent him to prophesy there. (CSB)

Amos had nothing that humanly would recommend him for this job. But God told him to go and that was enough. (CSB)

Like David, Amos was commanded to leave one flock (his family’s herd) and tend another (God’s people, Israel). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 1:3-14

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were

sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

1:3–14 All one sentence in Greek, this section is often called a “doxology” because it recites what God has done and is an expression of worship to honor him. Paul speaks first of the blessings we have through the Father (v. 3), then of those that come through the Son (vv. 4–13a) and finally of those through the Holy Spirit (1:13b–14). (CSB)

“Blessed be” ESV is a prayer based on the Jewish Berakah “Blessed” patter (Dt. 2:20-23). In Hebrew, the same word is used for our blessing (praising) God and His blessing us (giving us good gifts). Paul naturally begins this way, since he has spent three years worshiping with the Ephesians as their pastor. This Trinitarian prayer invokes the blessings of the Father (vv 3-6), Son (vv 7-12), and Holy Spirit (vv 13-14). (TLSB)

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus’ relation to God the Father is unique (see Jn 20:17 and note). (CSB)

Jesus is true God. As true man, He addressed the Father as “My God” (Mt. 27:46; John 20:17). He taught us to pray this way and prays with us. (TLSB)

blessed ... blessing. Jewish people used the word “bless” to express both God’s kindness to us and our thanks or praise to him. (CSB)

The happy condition of those who revere the Lord and do his will (see 94:12; 112:1; 119:1–2; 128:1; Pr 29:18; cf. Ps 41:1; 106:3; Pr 14:21; Isa 56:2), who put their trust in him (see 40:4; 84:5, 12; 144:15; 146:5; Pr 16:20; Isa 30:18; Jer 17:7; cf. Ps 2:12; 34:8), and so are blessed by God (see especially 41:1–3; 144:12–14; see also Mt 5:3–12). The Psalter begins by proclaiming the blessedness of the godly and ends by calling all living things to praise God in his earthly and heavenly sanctuaries (Ps 150). (CSB)

The word means more than “happy,” because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. “Blessed” here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. (CSB-Mt) (CSB)

Who has a joy, of which neither crosses nor losses can deprive him; who will be happy as long as he lives; and who has still more happiness in store for him when death is past. The psalmist is not speaking of the good man as happy because he is aiming at happiness, but as being so because he follows the Law of God, and finds joy therein, without seeking for joy for its own sake. (Note from Psalm 1) – A news reporter recently interviewed the winner of a 45-million-dollar lottery. The sheer overwhelming, “blessedness” of this woman’s experience was written all over her face! How much more, considering the eternal riches of God in our relationship with Christ are we to wear the mind, heart, and face of the blessed! (LL)

heavenly places. Occurs five times in Ephesians, emphasizing Paul’s perception that in the exaltation of Christ (his resurrection and enthronement at God’s right hand) and in the Christian’s union with the exalted Christ ultimate issues are involved—issues that pertain to the divine realm and that in the final analysis are worked out in and from that realm. At stake are God’s eternal eschatological purpose (3:11) and the titanic conflict between God and the powerful spiritual forces arrayed against him—a purpose and a conflict that come to focus in the history of redemption. Here (v. 3) Paul asserts that, through their union with the exalted Christ, Christians have already been made beneficiaries of every spiritual blessing that belongs to and comes from the heavenly realm. In vv. 20–22, he proclaims Christ’s exaltation to that realm and his elevation over all other powers and titles so that he rules over all for the sake of his church. According to 2:6, those who have been “made alive with Christ” share in Christ’s exaltation and enthronement in heaven. Thus (3:11) by the gathering of Gentiles and Jews into one body of Christ (the

church), God triumphantly displays his “manifold wisdom” to the “rulers and authorities” in the heavenly realm. As a result, the spiritual struggle of the saints here and now is not so much against “flesh and blood” as against the great spiritual forces that war against God in heaven (6:12). (CSB)

Could also be stated “heavenly matters.” A common phrase in Ephesians which is concerned with the ultimate battle between God’s forces and the devil’s. (TLSB)

This refers to God’s action in Christ over and beyond this earth and time. Christ sits at God’s right hand guiding and ruling for the benefit of his church. (LL)

This designates heaven itself not the visible heaven, but the other-worldly regions, heaven as the habitation of God. The blessings we enjoy are blessings of a higher world. This spiritual heavenly blessing of ours stands in contrast to the material perishable effects of this world. (Stoekhardt)

spiritual blessings - God blesses us physically and spiritually. Here Paul likely refers to the blessings given through the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

The blessing is brought by the Holy Spirit. (Third Article and Explanation) The idea of “spiritual” was totally unknown to them. These blessings have their origin in heaven, as the dwelling place of God. The blessings of the higher, of the perfect, of the future world are ours in Christ. (Buls) (Attributes of God - Attributes of Christ - verse 4 - Rev. 21 - Luther’s Evening and Morning Prayers)

Not one good thing is missing. Everything connected with “the heavenly realms” is theirs. Precisely what those blessings are will be indicated later. (Ephesians 6:14-18) (PBC)

in Christ. This phrase (or one like it) occurs 12 times in vv. 3–12. It refers to the spiritual union of Christ with believers, which Paul often symbolizes by the metaphor “body of Christ” (see, e.g., v. 23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30). (CSB)

This is the key theme of Ephesians. (TLSB) This can mean “by or through Christ,” as the agent of our salvation. Christ is also the One in whom we find God’s gifts. We are baptized “into Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27) and experience what He has (Eph. 2:4-6). (TLSB p. 1903)

Where the context speaks of what God has done, or still does, to us, has given or given us, is intimated that God’s deed, blessing, gift, is mediated through Christ. (Eph. 1:6, 13, 20; 2:7, 13; Col. 1:16) In our case “in Christ” amounts to “for Christ’s sake.” For the spiritual heavenly blessing is mediated to us through Christ inasmuch as He has obtained and merited it for us. Although the original is best reproduced by “through Christ,” one may translate “in Christ” and also with this translation consider Christ the Mediator of the blessing, or paraphrase thus: the blessing we received was established in Christ. Not outside of but in Christ it rested causatively that God blessed us with that spiritual blessing, since His redemptive work is the meritorious cause of this divine blessing. (Stoekhardt)

1:4 even – As in Greek – καθώς—Here this conjunction indicates not a comparison (“just as”), but a cause or explanation: “inasmuch as, because.” The rest of the prayer is an elucidation of the manner in which God has blessed us in Christ, which is the reason for us blessing him (1:3a). (CC)

chose. Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s letters (Ro 8:29–33; 9:6–26; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13; Col 3:12; 1Th 1:4; 2Th 2:13; Tit 1:1). In this chapter it is emphasized in the following ways: (1) “he chose us” (here); (2) “he predestined us” (v. 5); (3) “we were also chosen” (v. 11); (4) “having been predestined” (v. 11). (CSB)

According to etymology and composition “to choose,” in the original means and can mean nothing else than: to select, single out, to select, choose from several or from a great multitude of similar persons or things. The middle voice found exclusively in the NT, brings along the meaning “for oneself.” “To choose,” in the original middle voice, means: to choose for oneself, so that the chosen object belongs to the choosing subject, stands in relation to him or in some way serves him and his interests. (Stoeckhardt)

As Israel was once God’s chosen people (Dt. 4:37; 14:2), the Christian Church is now chosen (Rom. 9; 1 Peter 2:9-10). “God’s Word leads us to Christ, who is the Book of Life, in whom all are written and elected who are to be saved in eternity” (FC Ep XI 7). (TLSB)

Deuteronomy 7:6 “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”

Psalms 4:3 “Know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD will hear when I call to him.”

1 Corinthians 1:26 “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.”

James 2:5 “Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?”

1 Peter 2:9-10 “ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

before the foundation of the world. See Jn 17:24. (CSB)

Before we came into being, even before the foundation of the world was laid, God had thought of us in grace, and had his thoughts, in his purpose and council, taken us out of the world, out of loss, condemned mankind, had claimed and secured us for himself, had firmly resolved that we should always be and remain his own and live with him eternally. (Stoeckhardt)

holy and blameless. See 5:27 for the same pair of words. Holiness is the result—not the basis—of God’s choosing. It refers both to the holiness imparted to the believer because of Christ and to the believer’s personal sanctification (see note on 1Co 1:2). (CSB)

Not a description of our morality as seen by the world, but our status in God’s eyes. As Christ is holy and blameless, the perfect sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 7:26; 9:14), we, too, are made holy and blameless by forgiveness through His blood (Eph. 1:7). (TLSB)

A Christian’s life in all its connection with God’s will is holy, consecrated. The word translated “blameless” comes from a word describing an animal that is without blemish and therefore fit for sacrifice. To describe Christians as blameless people is to say we are committed to offering our Lord the very best – lives of excellent service and sacrifices that are pleasing to him. (LL)

Our blessings in Christ are not merely for this world. We are already experiencing here a foretaste of the eternal blessings that are in Christ.

Christ reconciled (made thoroughly different), washed and cleaned us in baptism and thus actually presented us as being holy and blameless and also glorious. (Lenski)

It is not that we were holy and blameless to begin with and for that reason God took a liking to us and chose us. No, far from it! But he chose us “to be holy and blameless.” (PBC)

before him – κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ—In the NT and early Christian literature, the preposition κατενώπιον, “before [someone],” is used only of God. It implies the authority of judgment and points to the glorious face of God, before which only those who are holy and without blemish may stand. A holy God consumes anything in his presence that is unholy. The work of the Gospel is to prepare God’s people to stand before him in a position of privilege and intimacy. (CC)

In love. We could never be holy before God unless the loving relations between us were restored. The spirit of love, trust, admiration, directed to God helps our complete sanctification – changes us into the same image. (PC)

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

1:5 *predestined us* – προορίσας ἡμᾶς—“*Since* he had predestined us” renders the causal participle. Because this is an aorist participle, it should be understood as an action that preceded the act of choosing (1:4). God’s choice (both in eternity and in the act of Baptism) arises from his plan. προορίζω is used in the NT exclusively of God’s plan of salvation (Acts 4:28; Rom 8:29–30; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:5, 11). (CC)

The Doctrine of Predestination

The primary point is that as God’s chosen we can rest assured that our salvation will not be taken away from us.

Predestination is whatever God has done, is doing and still will do for us during our life on earth to bring us to faith in Christ and to preserve us in this faith unto eternal salvation.

Some things to remember:

1. It is a mystery that we will never understand this side of heaven.
 - Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”
 - Romans 11:33-36, “³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”³⁵“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”
2. It is not a matter of chance.
 - Ephesians 1:4, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”
3. It is not motivated by any personal merit and worthiness or better conduct on the part of humans.

- 2 Timothy 1:9, “who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”
 - Romans 11:6, “And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.
4. People are not predestined to hell. That would be contrary to God’s will.
- 1 Timothy 2:4, “who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,”
 - Ezekiel 18:23, “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”
Luke 15:10 “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”
5. No one should think that, because he is in faith today and thereby assured of his election, he may now discard the Gospel, lose faith, live in sin, and still regard himself as one of the elect who will unfaithfully be saved. People can through willful and intentional neglect throw away their faith. There is no such thing as “once saved, always saved” [Cain Gen 4:16 – Pharaoh – Judas/Peter – Jews – Romans 1:24]. We must make use of those means by which God assures us of His grace and thereby of our election.
6. The life of the Christian is not in the hands of “fate.” In this short phrase three things are said:
- a. Our destiny is in God’s hands,
 - b. The spirit in which God handles us is loving, and
 - c. Christ is the agent through whom our destiny is managed.

We have no advance or direct information of our election unto eternal life, but we may know of it by its results in our lives, by the faith, in which we now stand. As long as we remain in this faith, we should regard ourselves as the elect of God, and be certain that we are bound for heaven.

(Much of the information shared about predestination comes from: “A Summary of Christian Doctrine” by Edward W. A Koehler)

John 10:27-28: “²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

In the NT divine predestination is always presented in the context of gratitude for God’s grace, never is the sense of blaming God or questioning God’s choices. (LL)

Luther says, “If you believe, you are called; if you are called, your surely are also predestinated.”
(What Luther Says – A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian – Plass – page 456)

2 Timothy 1:9 “who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,”

adoption. Christians are already God’s children, but this is a reference to the full realization of our inheritance in Christ. – Adoption was common among the Greeks and Romans, who granted the adopted son all the privileges of a natural son, including inheritance rights. Christians are adopted sons by grace; Christ, however, is God’s Son by nature. (CSB)

In the Greco-Roman world, only sons could inherit (Gal. 4:7). Some men ignored their natural children and declared an adopted son as heir. To be adopted by God is to be reborn into His family, made heirs of His kingdom (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:16-17; 1 John 3:1-2). This happens, when we are all made “sons” (children, heirs) of God through His Son, Jesus (John 3:5; Gal. 3:26-29). (TLSB)

The original Greek word for “predestination” means adoption and then the filial relation established through adoption - sonship. (Stoekhardt)

In the ancient world, when a man adopted a son, that son’s entire identity and future changed. The grateful son, lavished with blessings and an inheritance, knew in a real way the significance of a father’s choice. Being chosen meant everything. Many adopted children today know the power and reassurance of being loved by choice. Christians are adopted children who never stop celebrating the sheer grace of our heavenly Father’s choice. There are no accidental adoptions. (LL)

Deuteronomy 14:2 “for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.”

Hosea 11:1 ““When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

John 1:12 “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”

Romans 8:15 “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.^s And by him we cry, “*Abba*,^h Father.”

2 Corinthians 6:18 “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Galatians 4:5-6 “to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*, Father.”

IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS PLEASURE AND WILL – Thus the apostle finally points to the motive of predestination to adoption or of eternal election. The essential concept is the free self-determination of God. The entire expression should indicate that this act of God originated alone in God, not in something outside of God. In His election and predestination God took into consideration nothing outside of Himself, nothing that is in man, in no way considered man’s conduct or the cessation of wanton opposition on his part. (Stoekhardt)

1:6 *to the praise.* See vv. 12, 14. Election is for God’s glory. (CSB)

It is to show that Divine grace is not a limp shallow attribute, but one of glorious riches, deserving infinite praise. The idea of the richness, fullness, abundance, of God's grace is prominent throughout the epistle. God desires to draw attention, not only to this attribute, but to the boundlessness of it – thus draw the love and confidence of his creatures to himself and inspire them with the desire to imitate him. (PC)

This refrain closes each section of the prayer, confessing that the blessings are due to God's grace, not our own merit. (TLSB) Explanation of Lord's Prayer: Fifth Petition: We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

His glorious grace – Knaritoo To highly favor or honor someone and to do so without having them merited it.

Through the grace of God in Jesus, whose entire work is an expression of the love of God toward us, we become both the objects and the recipients of His love. (Buls)

Beloved - This describes Jesus at His Baptism (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and transfiguration (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7). Through our Baptism into Christ, we, too, are beloved of God (Eph. 5:1; Col. 3:12). (TLSB)

1:7 redemption. See v. 14; 4:30; Ro 3:24; Tit 2:14. The Ephesians were familiar with the Greco-Roman practice of redemption: Slaves were freed by the payment of a ransom. Similarly, the ransom necessary to free sinners from the bondage of sin and the resulting curse imposed by the law (see Gal 3:13) was the death of Christ (called here "his blood"). (CSB)

Payment made to free a slave or captive - a common picture for salvation in the NT, evoking the exodus (Ex. 15:13; Luke 1:68). (TLSB)

Redemption implies that someone is a slave or captive and needs to be ransomed. (PBC)

through his blood. Cf. 2:13; 1Pe 1:18–19. (CSB)

OT sacrifices are also evoked (Lev. 17:11; Hebrew 9:14-15; 1 Peter 1:18-19). (TLSB)

St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "Where there is reconciliation there is remission of sins. And what is that but justification? Whether, therefore, we call it reconciliation or remission of sins, or justification, or again, redemption, or liberation from the chains of the devil... we have been justified freely by His (Christ's) blood" (SLSB, pp. 287-88). (TLSB)

forgiveness of our trespasses – Sin is not only canceled out in terms of guilt, but is actually removed from our lives.

Forgiveness implies that someone has acted improperly toward another and in so doing has incurred guilt that needs to be covered over or taken away. (PBC)

Luther: "Where there is forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation.

Psalm 103:12 "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

according to the riches of his grace – ploutos An abundance of wealth to be given.

With these words Paul again expressly points to the motive of redemption and forgiveness. This His grace God has further demonstrated to us in a rich measure well explained in the coming verses. (Stoeckhardt)

Ephesians 2:7 “in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19 “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

1 Timothy 1:14 “The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

1:8 *lavished upon us – perisseuo* To excel beyond any imagination. To be superabundant in giving.

“In accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us,” He did the unthinkable: God Himself paid the price. He sent His Son to be our substitute, to suffer and die in our place. Through His blood we have been rescued from the captivity of sin and freed from its guilt. (PBC)

In a million years we would not have devised such a plan. Rather, God devised it. (TLSB)

God is the prodigal – that is, extravagant – father of Luke 15, waiting for us to come and eager to shower us with an abundance of undeserved love. (LL)

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Psalms 36:8 “They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.”

John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”

Ephesians 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,”

Philippians 4:19 “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

2 Peter 1:11 “and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

all wisdom and insight – With God’s grace comes wisdom and understanding. The wisdom, of which Paul writes, is to know and understand the mysteries of God so that they make sense of life. Wisdom is applied Scriptural truth. Wise people know God’s truth (knowledge) and have a firm grasp of it so that they articulate it (understanding), but they can also apply God’s truth to their own life experiences. The wisdom God gives to Christians may appear foolish by worldly standards (1 Cor. 1:20-25), but in the end it is the wisdom that matters most for a blessed life. (LL)

Many ancient religions and philosophies, such as Gnosticism, promised special knowledge (4:14; Col. 2:16-223), but Paul taught that true wisdom is found in Christ (cf. Matt. 13:54; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3). (TLSB)

Wisdom and the similar expressions: discretion, prudence, understanding, do not always in Biblical usage designate only the intellectual faculty and endowment, but often the mind, the disposition, refer at the same time to the tendency of man’s of the Christian will. They appear in both the OT and NT as religious moral concepts and are also used in the practical sense, in the sense of practical wisdom, discretion, prudence, which is intent upon the right, which knows how to attain which is right, corresponding to the goal, corresponding to the will of God. So also in our letter. (Stoekhardt)

Make us ready and perfect for a holy, blameless conduct in love. All these gifts, everything that we are and possess in spiritual matters we owe entirely to the free grace of God. (Kretzmann)

Romans 11:33-36, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

Proverbs 4:7: “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”

1:9 *mystery*. The so-called mystery religions of Paul’s day used the Greek word (*mysterion*) in the sense of something that was to be revealed only to the initiated. Paul himself, however, used it to refer to something formerly hidden or obscure but now revealed by God for all to know and understand (see 16:25; 1Co 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3–4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3; 2Th 2:7; 1Ti 3:9, 16).}; Col 1:6 {*All over the world*. Hyperbole, to dramatize the rapid spread of the gospel into every quarter of the Roman empire within three decades of Pentecost (see v. 23; Ro 1:8; 10:18; 16:19). In refutation of the charge of the false teachers, Paul insists that the Christian faith is not merely local or regional but worldwide. (CSB)

An astonishing revelation – the Gospel is for the Gentiles as well as the Jew (3:6).“Mystery religions” in the ancient world promised to reveal mysterious truths as adherents progressed to higher levels. For Paul, the emphasis is not on things kept hidden, but that things once hidden in God’s plan are now revealed to all (3:9). Paul defines the mystery primarily as Jesus Himself (5:32; Col. 1:27; 2:2-3), whom God revealed as the Messiah to the apostles and prophets (3:3-5), and whom they revealed to the world in their preaching (3:8-9; 6:19; Col. 1:25-27). (TLSB)

Not only would we not have thought up a plan like this, but we would never have grasped or understood it if He had not made it known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He proposed in Christ. The mystery of God’s Will, will be treated more fully late in this letter (3:2-13). Suffice it at this stage to say that the mystery of God’s will is almost synonymous with God’s plan of salvation, that is, His will to save sinners. God’s plan is not mysterious in the sense that it mystifies people or is incomprehensible to them. It is a mystery only in the sense that people cannot come to

understand it by themselves. God has to explain it to them and lead them to know it and accept it. And that He does of course, in the gospel that proclaims His grace in Christ. (PBC)

Note from Acts 10:2 “(Cornelius) a devout man who feared God.” - Although he was pious and generous, he did not yet know Jesus as his Savior from sin. He would have known there was a coming Messiah. Ancient inscriptions have shown that Gentile patrons gave gifts to synagogues. “Cornelius living among the Jews, had heard long before about the coming Messiah, through whom he was righteous before God. In such faith, his prayers and alms were acceptable to God” (SA III VIII 8). (TLSB)

The word “mystery” encompasses all of God’s purposes in Christ – knowledge not known except through the revelation of the inspired Scriptures, centered in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel. The ultimate result of God’s revelation in Word and Christ is the salvation and inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles in the NT church, and the bringing of all things in heaven and earth together in eternity, when in the new heaven and new earth all God’s people shall live with Christ forever (2 Peter 3:130 (LL)

his purpose – The is a word of “purpose is eudokia – “good pleasure – and stresses both the absolute sovereignty and benevolence of God. The Greek word is always use in the sense of a gracious decree from God.

1:10 a plan – The word “plan” is oikonomia – the word for “steward” or “stewardship” Here the meaning is the execution of a project previously determined.

Fullness of time to unite all things – This phrase makes the plan of historical – the plan is worked out in this world. History is significant because it is the sphere of the saving activity of God. The word here for “time” (literally, “the times”) is the standard Greek for a moment of intense significance

The messianic age began with Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection (Gal. 4:4; Luke 2:6; John 12:23). (TLSB)

A time of salvation (Greek kairos). We might best translate this phrase, “When the time was exactly right. To be filled completely, to bring to a head.

Romans 5:6, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”

2 Corinthians 6:2, “For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ (Is. 49:8) I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”

to unite all things in him. Paul uses a significant term here that not only has the idea of leadership but also was often used of adding up a column of figures. A contemporary way of putting it might be to say that in a world of confusion, where things do not “add up” or make sense, we look forward to the time when everything will be brought into meaningful relationship under the headship of Christ. (CSB)

Literally, “put under one head,” i.e., Christ (cf. v. 22; 4:15; 5:23). Because Jesus is both God and man, humankind and God are reconciled in Him (2:16; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). Because all who are baptized are “in Christ,” they are also reconciled to one another, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free (2:14; Ga. 3:26-29). (TLSB)

God’s purpose is to have everything add up to and make sense in Christ. (LL)

All things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth. Brought into one unit, actually become one. The children according to election he wanted to lead, one after the other, to Christ, join them together in Christ, make them all one in Christ, unite them in one whole. So here for the first time in our letter we meet the idea of the one holy Christian Church. (Stoekhardt)

1:11 *In him*. Christ is the center of God's plan. Whether the universe or the individual Christian is in view, it is only in relationship to Christ that there is a meaningful future destiny. Paul goes on to speak, not of the world as a whole, but of those who respond to God's call. (CSB)

obtained – Literally means “appointed,” “allotted.” (TLSB)

an inheritance - The Israelite tribes received the Promised Land as their allotment from God, Christians receive God's kingdom, eternal life, and heaven (Mt. 25:34; Col. 1:12; 1 Peter 1:4). As we are God's children, this can be called an inheritance (1:14, 18). (TLSB)

predestined - “In Him we are seek the eternal election of the Father, who has determined in His eternal divine counsel that He would save no one except those who know His Son Christ and truly believe in Him. Other thoughts are to be entirely banished...We know (assuredly that out of pure grace, without any merit of our own, we have been elected in Christ to eternal life” (FC Ep XI 13). (TLSB)

according to the purpose – God's inheritance is not a fortuitous benefit, but the result of God's deliberate and eternal foreordination; it rest therefore on an immoveable foundation. (PC)

In speaking of how God's eternal plan centers on Christ, Paul returns once more to the subject of election and predestination. He states, “In him 9Christ) we were also chosen, having been predestinated according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that, we who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. (PBC)

council of his will – Man resolves to do many things but does not by far accomplish everything he has determined to do. Whatever God has determined he also carries through and accomplishes in spite of all obstacles. (Stoekhardt)

1:12 *we, who were the first to hope in Christ*. Probably a reference to those Jews who, like Paul, had become believers before many Gentiles had. (CSB)

Paul writes as a Jewish Christian, one who received the Messiah. He insists that the Gentiles, who receive Christ through his preaching (v. 13) are united with the Jews in Christ by their common Baptism. (TLSB)

This does not simply describe the believers out of Israel but points at the same time to this that God, who does all things after the counsel of His will, has actually carried out His eternal decree of election in the elect out of Israel. (Stoekhardt)

Whoever hopes and trusts in Christ from his heart, he is through Christ a child of God and a vessel to the praise and glory of God; in him God's power and grace have glorified themselves. We may render vv. 11, 12 thus: in whom we also have been chosen, since we were predestinated according to the purpose of Him who does all things according to the counsel of His will, that we should be to the praise of His glory - we, we who have also before hoped and trusted in Christ. (Stoekhardt)

God's faithfulness to the Jewish nation was only part of His plan, though. Paul hints at that when he says, “We...were the first to hope in Christ,” implying there are others. We Jews may have been the first to believe in Christ, Paul says - but he quickly adds, “You (Ephesian readers, Gentiles by birth) also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” The Jews are part of

God's plan, but in Christ the Gentiles are also in the picture. Note the implications of that for God's plan and purpose of bringing "all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." (PBC)

to the praise of his glory - We should redound (To have an effect or consequence - To return) to the praise, to the honor of God's glory. God wanted to glorify Himself in us through His grace and mercy, then also through His power and might. This present statement concerning our eternal election and predestination is not simply a repetition of what was said at the beginning of this section, but by means of the words "even in Him: in whom also we have been elected," etc., stands in close connection with the purpose of God's will just mentioned: to gather together all things in Christ. God wanted to gather together all who are children in heaven and on earth in Christ, in the Christ in whom it is established that we are chosen, or through whom we are chosen and predestined unto adoption, unto the praise of God's glory. We owe it to Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, that God has chosen us in grace unto His own, who are by nature poor sinners. Christ should also then be the focal point, in whom all the elect children of earth along with the elect angels are found together. (Stoekhardt)

1:13 *you also*. Probably refers to the majority of the Ephesians, who were Gentiles. (CSB)

when you heard the word of truth – Heard and received the truth as it is in Jesus, the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Jesus, just as freely as did the believing Jews, and to the same blessed effects. (PC)

The sinner hears the Gospel concerning Christ and accepts this Word in faith. He who does that thereby also accepts Christ, of whom the Gospel speaks. (Stoekhardt)

gospel of your salvation – τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν—The genitive has two aspects: "the Gospel message whose *content* is the salvation accomplished for you" and "the Gospel message that *brings* you salvation." (CC)

sealed with the promise . In those days a seal denoted ownership. – Such faith is sealed and resealed through Word and Sacraments. A stamp on our hand can wear off and so can the seal if we neglect his Word and Sacrament. (CSB)

Baptized. A seal marked ownership. The word was used for a wax seal on a scroll (John 3:33; Rev. 5:1-5; Jer. 32:10); also for a brand on any animal or a tattoo on a slave or soldier. In the OT, God sealed Cain to protect him (Gen. 4:15), and circumcision sealed the Israelites as God's people (Gen. 17:11; Rom. 4:11; Col. 2:11-12). God seal marks all those in heaven (Rev. 7:2-4; 9:4). A seal leaves its image, through Baptism, the promised Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33) makes us His dwelling (2 Cor. 1:21-22). "Baptism and the Lord's Supper - appointed as outward signs - work as seal" (LC III 98). (TLSB)

The impression of it is partly within believers and partly without. Within it is the felt result of the working of the Holy Spirit – the feeling of satisfaction and delight in the work and person of Christ, of love confidence, and joy flowing out toward God and the desire and endeavor in all things to be conformed to his will. Without, it is the fruit of the Spirit, the new man, created in righteousness and holiness after the image of Christ. (PC)

The Holy Spirit protects us unto salvation, which is promised us in the Gospel of Christ, to which we have been elected from the beginning. Preservation is a work of the Holy Spirit. (Stoekhardt)

The Ephesians bear a seal: having the Holy Spirit in their hearts. In ancient times a seal was a sign of ownership. For a Christian to bear the seal of the Holy Spirit is an indicator that he or she belongs to God. That is a present blessing. (PBC)

1:14 *guarantee*. The Christian's possession of the Holy Spirit is not only evidence of his present salvation (vv. 14, 16) but is also a pledge of his future inheritance—and not only a pledge but also the down payment on that inheritance (see 2Co 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14).} (CSB)

Deposit or down payment; a substantial part of a purchase price paid in advance. The Holy Spirit dwells in us as the firstfruits of God's gifts; the final "payment" is the resurrection and eternal life (Rom. 8:23)

The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the earnest money, of our heavenly inheritance. The Holy Spirit brought us to faith and, as Martin Luther put it in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, The Holy Spirit "keeps us in the one true faith." In other words, we are secure. Our place in heaven is guaranteed. A deposit has been made. Our reservation is confirmed in the ongoing presence and power of the Spirit in our lives. (LL)

We have future blessing. A deposit, down payment, is the first installment of a transaction and guarantees the rest of the obligation will also be met. (PBC)

2 Timothy 1:12, "That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day."

to the praise of his glory – This is a vivid purpose statement for the life of the Christian. We are people of praise. That means our lives celebrate Christ. Our attitudes and our actions are meant to lift people to see Christ with us and within us. (LL)

1:3–14 Paul directs the Ephesians away from themselves, teaching them to trust in God's promises in Christ. Pride tempts us to trust in our commitment to God; doubt makes us worry that we are not committed enough. Jesus blesses us spiritually by leading us to repent of sinful pride by the Law and calming our worried hearts through the Gospel. • Father, forgive my self-centeredness, and teach me to rely on Your loving plan for me; through Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 6:14-29

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." **15** But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." **16** But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." **17** For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. **18** For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." **19** And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, **20** for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly. **21** But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. **22** For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." **23** And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." **24** And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." **25** And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." **26** And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to

her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

6:14-8:30 The new section introduced by Ch 6:14 and extending to Ch 8:30 focuses upon a period during which Jesus was frequently in retirement beyond the borders of Galilee. During the mission of the Twelve, Mark calls attention to the reaction of Herod Antipas, who has heard of the mighty works of Jesus. Herod's suspicion that Jesus is John returned from the dead (Ch 6:14-16) introduces the parenthetical account of the imprisonment and execution of the Baptist (Ch 6:17-29). At the return of the Twelve Jesus withdraws to a solitary place, pursued by multitude. In compassion He provides bread in the wilderness, and five thousand are fed (Ch 6:35-44). A second feeding of four thousand is reported in the region of the Decapolis (Ch 8:1-10), and the striking recurrence of the word "bread" throughout this section provides the pervading motif (Chs. 6:52; 7:2, 28; 8:14 ff). The importance of the two feeding miracles is emphasized when the disciples' own misunderstanding of Jesus are traced to their failure to understand the significance of the abundant provision of bread. While a single instance of the public teaching occurs in Ch 7:1-23, the accent falls on the instruction of the disciples, whose hardness of heart, unbelief and failure to understand is a prominent element in the record. A point of transition is provided by Ch 8:22-26 where the restoring of sight to a man who was blind signals the opening of the eyes of the disciples as well. A climax in Mark's narrative is achieved in Ch 8:27-29 when Jesus and His company approach Caesarea Philippi where Jesus' dignity as Messiah is acknowledged for the first time. (Lane)

6:14 King Herod. Mark may here have used the title "king" sarcastically (since Herod was actually a tetrarch), or perhaps he simply used Herod's popular title. (CSB)

Matthew and Luke use the more specific term "tetrarch" (Mt. 14:1; Lk. 9:7) because the Roman emperor did not recognize Herod Antipas' claim to royalty. (TLSB)

Herod's total disregard for Jewish sensitivity was displayed not only in his marriage to Herodias, but in the selection of an ancient cemetery as the site for his capital, Tiberias. By this choice Herod virtually excluded Jewish settlers, for residence in the city would render them perpetually unclean in terms of ritual law. (Lane)

John the Baptist...raised from the dead – Herod's fear and guilt over John's death likely caused his suspicion that the Baptizer had returned from the dead. Others also suspected that Jesus might be John raised from the dead. (8:28). (TLSB)

Mark practices the art of narrative framing in this account: the story of Herod beheading John the Baptist falls in the middle of Jesus' apostolic sending. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

By referencing what Herod heard, Mark asks the reader to keep in mind the story of Jesus sending his disciples out in mission. Reading the larger narrative unit, notice how Mark starts by telling the readers how Jesus sends his disciples out (vv 7–12) and ends by telling his readers how the disciples return (v 30), but, in the middle, only relates this deadly royal opposition to God's Holy Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

The world into which Jesus sends his disciples is a place filled with troubling spirits. Jesus called his disciples "that they might . . . have authority to cast out demons" (3:14–15); he sends them out to do that

divine work within the fallen world (6:7, 13); and yet such work is dangerous as John is one of a long line of prophets who will be killed for speaking God's Word and foreshadows the death of Jesus (12:6–8), as well as that of his followers (13:9–13). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

The story of Herod and John the Baptist offers us a picture in miniature of what it means for God's saving Word of Law and Gospel to enter into the world. God will work through his Word. Though it may bring death, God will use it to bring life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

6:16 *John ... has been raised from the dead!* Herod, disturbed by an uneasy conscience and disposed to superstition, feared that John had come back to haunt him. (CSB)

Herod repeats what others were saying ("John the Baptist has been raised from the dead," v 14) with the addition of one small detail ("whom I beheaded," v 16). This detail initiates a movement backward in time as one enters into the memory of Herod and hears of his struggle with power and pleasure and promises, ultimately silencing God's voice as it entered the halls of the palace. Interestingly, Mark hereby sets this past sin of Herod in the context of the present ministry of Jesus, calling people to repentance and casting out demons. Now is indeed the day of salvation for Herod. Now the kingdom of heaven is being proclaimed. The question is "Will Herod listen, or will he continue to resist God's call to repentance and lose a place in God's kingdom of grace?" (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Herod may have heard the opinions of the others through his courtiers, and he clung to his statement: Him whom I beheaded, John, it is; he is risen. The torment of a bad conscience, of a guilty heart, is worse than any torture that might be devised by man. It causes people to suspect where there is no ground for suspicion, and puts ghosts before the eyes of men where there is no reason for fear. Herod had reasons for trembling. (Kretzmann)

6:17 *seized John... and bound him put in prison.* See 1:14; Lk 3:19–20. Josephus says that John was imprisoned at Machaerus, the fortress in Perea on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. (CSB)

Herodias. See note on Mt 14:3. – (A granddaughter of Herod the Great. First she married her uncle, Herod Philip (Herod the Great also had another son named Philip), who lived in Rome. While a guest in their home, Herod Antipas persuaded Herodias to leave her husband for him. Marriage to one's brother's wife, while the brother was still living, was forbidden by the Mosaic law (Lev 18:16). (CSB)

Philip. See note on Mt 14:3. – (The son of Herod the Great and Mariamne, the daughter of Simon the high priest, and thus a half-brother of Herod Antipas, born to Malthace.) (CSB)

6:18 *had been saying* – He has repeatedly denounced (elegen, "kept on saying,")

not lawful – Herod divorced his first wife, the daughter of a Nabataen king, in order to marry Herodias. (Nabataea was the region east of the Dead Sea) However, it was not lawful for him to marry his brother's wife (cf. Lev. 18:16; 20:21). Furthermore, Herodias had divorced her husband, also forbidden by Jewish law. (TLSB)

6:19 *nursed a grudge* – Given her shameful behavior, Herodias was understandably sensitive and therefore irked that John called attention to her divorce and remarriage. (TLSB)

6:20 *Herod feared* – John was a prophet who sought neither riches nor political power. Prophets often rebuked kings for their sins (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:1-14). (TLSB)

protected him – Jewish historian Josephus wrote that Herod imprisoned John at Machaerus, a fortress overlooking the Dead Sea. There, the prophet was relatively safe from the hatred of Herodias. (TLSB)

heard John – John preached the Law but also that the Gospel of the kingdom of God was at hand. (TLSB)

6:21 *on his birthday* – τοῖς γενεσίοις αὐτοῦ δεῖπνον, “a dinner on his birthday” (6:21): A Hellenistic characteristic, Jews did not traditionally celebrate birthdays. (CC)

6:22 *the daughter of Herodias*. This narrative seems to imply that Herodias was biding her time, but that she deliberately sent her daughter into the feast to dance, in order to induce Herod to grant her desire. (Lane)

6:23 *up to half my kingdom*. A proverbial reference to generosity, not to be taken literally (see Est 5:3, 6). Generosity suited the occasion and would win the approval of the guests. (CSB)

Herod did not have authority to dispense with half of his kingdom, but used the phrase as an extravagant expression. (TLSB)

6:24-28 Herod **ironically** attempts to save his honor by taking John’s life. (TLSB)

6:24 ἐξελθοῦσα, “upon going out” (CC)

said to her mother – It may be that her mother had instructed her even beforehand what she should ask for, as the account of Matthew implies, though not expressly says, and now she needed a further urging. At any rate, she hurries to her mother, who promptly impresses upon her the need to ask for, and insist upon, only one thing. Whether there was another determining factor or not, Salome, the dancer, was now ready to do her mother's bidding. (Kretzmann)

6:26 *greatly distressed* – Ambrose: (This) is not repentance on the part of the king, but a confession of guilt. (NPNF2 10:385). (TLSB)

This verse shows Herod Antipas at his worst, namely, weak, corrupt, and shallow. He is worried about his honor more than anything else. Indeed, if he broke his oath, never again would he be trusted. (CC)

Mark’s account is filled with irony. Herod was never a king. In fact, when he sought to be named a king (as had been the case with Herodias’s brother), he was banished (along with Herodias) for an act of treason. Here, at the climax of the narrative, Mark recounts how Herod brings about John’s death because he remains faithful to his own word rather than respond faithfully to the saving Word of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

The request of Salome, expressed with arrogance and malice, immediately sobered Antipas. Only moments before he had reveled in boisterous conviviality; now he expressed the deepest grief. (Lane)

6:27 And so the ghastly spectacle was enacted to the bitter end. There was an officer at the king's court who combined in his person the work of a courier, police officer, and executioner. To him the king's command went to furnish the head of John the Baptist. (Kretzmann)

Note how the “king’s” actions are now controlled by the urgency of the girl. (CC)

6:28 *head on a platter* – This was a grisly display of John’s severed head – at a meal no less – illustrates the extreme corruption of Herod and his high society friends. (TLSB)

It is worth observing the deliberateness of the actions of this verse (see the deliberate repetition of verbs, nouns, and pronouns), which seems to confirm the evil intent of the girl and her mother. It must be observed, however, that whatever the girl’s intent, Antipas does not treat the head on a platter as the last course of the birthday dinner; he does not even touch it. The executioner brings it right to the girl, who passes it right to her mother. For this reason, this pericope does *not* constitute a mockery of the meals provided by Jesus, despite the use of the verb ἐπέταξεν, “he directed,” both in 6:27 (with Herod as the implied subject) and in the feeding of the five thousand (6:39, with Jesus as the implied subject). (CC)

6:29 It is difficult to know how long after John had been slain that word of his death reached his disciples. It is probable that they were not far from the fortress in order to serve him in any way they could. Their final act of ministry was to take up his corpse and place it in a tomb, presumably in the vicinity of Machaerus. The death of John, however, did not bring the Baptist movement to an end, nor was this the final time Herod would be forced to remember John. (Lane)

Herod tries to salvage his reputation by allowing John’s disciples to bury John’s body. John’s burial prefigures the interment of Jesus (15:42-47). (TLSB)

The parallel between the burial of John the Baptizer and Jesus is striking in terms of vocabulary. A strong connection between John and Jesus is drawn thereby. As there is an ironic parallel between “King” Herod Antipas and “King” Jesus in this pericope, so this pericope supports a strong parallel between Jesus and John. (CC)

6:14–29 Coming just after the story about Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth, the tragic story of John gives an unmistakable foreshadowing of what awaits Jesus: rejection and even violent hostility. But rejection and violence cannot overcome the risen Lord. His victory over death and the grave shows how wonderfully He can turn such antagonism into life and salvation. • Lord, give us a faith like John’s, especially his integrity and trust. Help us to believe unquestioningly that faithfulness unto death will receive the crown of eternal life. Amen. (TLSB)