

The Invisible War in Ephesians: Predestination: a Predesigned Plan for Spiritual Growth; The Invisible War's Fifth Columns; Lucifer's Officer Corps, Eph 1:21

The Invisible War in the Book of Ephesians

1. Ephesians was not written specifically to the church at Ephesus but instead was an encyclical, meaning that it was intended to be circulated among several churches in a group, namely those in the Roman province of Asia, and most likely to the seven churches that are mentioned by John in Revelation 2 and 3.

A circular letter. On this view Ephesians is a letter intended to be read by Christians living in the Roman province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. It was not addressed to any particular local congregation, but to all. From Ephesus it was circulated throughout the churches of proconsular Asia, no doubt by means of a courier who may have been Tychicus \tik'-i-kus\ (See Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8; 2 Timothy 4:12).¹

2. Our first passage is in chapter 1. The context of this chapter is the introduction of the predetermined plan of God, called the prothesis. This word is a compound of *pro-* meaning "before" and *thesis* which comes from secular Greek *tithēmi* and means "to establish, to institute, to appoint, to bring about." Thus, prothesis means "to determine or establish beforehand" and makes reference to the predetermined plan of God.
3. The first chapter introduces the predetermined plan for believers, also referred to as predestination: this word is **προορίζω, proorizō** in the Greek and is a sovereign decree by which God, in eternity past, predesigned for believers a system by which they could grow in grace, serve him, and qualify for temporal and eternal blessings.
4. Certain things are predetermined by God for the exclusive benefit of the believer but within this system there are certain negative aspects which are permitted so that human volition may be challenged to utilize the system designed by God to resolve challenges and difficulties with divine viewpoint.
5. Part of this predetermined system is the requirement to grow in grace in order to recognize, reject, and overcome these challenges among which are those that relate to the Invisible War.
6. In fact, there are really only two major fronts in the Invisible War for the believer: (1) the intrinsic sin nature and (2) extrinsic demon influence. Our own behaviors daily document the existence of the former but our tendencies toward rationalism and empiricism cause us to reject the existence of the latter.

¹ A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gen. ed., Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 11:12.

7. Ephesians contains several passages that clearly document the problem of not only demon influence but also the personalities that exercise it.
8. The first reference is found in Ephesians 1:21-22. It is at the end of a long sentence that runs from verse 18 through 23. Paul's prayer in verse 18 is that Asian believers may be enlightened so that they may know (1) what is the hope of their calling, (2) the riches of their inheritance, and (3) the magnitude of imputed omnipotence. These are in accordance with the workings of divine power which God brought about through Christ:

Ephesians 1:20 - ... which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

9. The sentence continues and concludes in verse 21 where Paul introduces the subject of Lucifer's system of rank and authority within his demonic army over which Christ is now superior:

Ephesians 1:21 - far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

10. The point Paul is making is that through the power of God, Jesus Christ has been placed in a position of superior rank and authority over all creation including Lucifer and the fallen angels that serve under him. This is brought out by the opening prepositional phrase:

ὑπεράνω, hyperanō - an improper preposition used adverbially with the ablative of separation. This establishes a status quo position of authority in Jesus Christ over the fallen angels. It is translated "over and above all."
11. When God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and when the Lord was seated at the right hand of the Father, He assumed superior rank and authority over all creation. His superiority over the demonic armies is emphasized by Paul's breakdown of the army's table of organization, introduced by the singular adjective **πᾶς, pas**, translated "every."
12. The first rank mentioned is translated "rule," the Greek noun **ἀρχή, archē**. This is a metonymy: a figure of speech that replaces the name of one thing with the name of something else closely associated with it. It denotes power and those who hold it. It defines those fallen angels with the rank of general officer.

The ἀρχαί are wholly hostile to God (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16). We may gather from Ephesians 6:12 that different spheres of influence are allotted to them, probably by their overlord (Ephesians 2:2). The reference is not to dominion over other spirits but to power over the rest of the cosmos, especially the earthly.²

13. Jesus Christ is superior to and separate from these “rulers.” The plan of God, or the prothesis of God, decreed in eternity past that the Christ would ultimately rule over the angels who revolted. As the angelic conflict rages Lucifer presently remains the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31), but the Lord has command authority over him, his minions, and history which He controls on behalf of the pivot.

² Gerhard Delling, “ἀρχαί,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed., Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:483.