

# Rhetorical Design

Catherine Anderson

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## Rhetorical Design

Taught by [Catherine Anderson](#)

Series: Ephesians

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From The Bible Project Classroom: Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

<https://bibleproject.com/course/ephesians>

and from the NIV Commentary on Ephesians, by Klyne Snodgrass

Design of Chapters 1, 2, 3

**A 1:1-14** Victory Song to the Father, Son, and Spirit.

**B 1:15-21** Prayer for an apocalypse of power.

**C 2:1-10** Rescued from death and the ruler of the age.

**C 2:11-18** Rescued from hostility and alienation from God's family.

**D 2:19-22** The messianic victory monument: the new temple.

**C' 3:1-13** The imprisoned apostle of the messianic apocalypse.

**B' 1:14-19** Prayer for power to grasp the Messiah's love.

**A' 3:20-21** Doxology song to the Father and the Son.

**A and A'**: This section open and closes with poetic hymns of praise (1:1-14 // 3:20-21), honoring God for revealing his purpose for all creation through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

**B and B'**: Inside of these (1:15-21 // 3:14-19) are two corresponding prayers for a revelation (apocalypse) of knowledge and power for God's people.

**C and C'**: These are two contrasting expositions of the new Exodus. 2:1-18 has two parallel panels retelling God's liberation of dying slaves

(2:1-10) who were also separated from God's covenant family of Israel (2:11-18). Each panel resolves in a celebration of their resurrection and incorporation into the new humanity. Matching this is Paul's own story (3:1-13) of becoming a herald of the message in 2:1-18, which has made him a "prisoner of the Messiah."

**D:** At the center (2:19-22) of this entire rhetorical unit (but also the climax of 2:11-18 as a whole, is the creation of the new messianic humanity, which is the new temple anticipated by the Old Testament prophets and Jesus himself.

### **Design of Chapters 4, 5, 6**

**A 4:1-16** Promoting the unity of the new humanity.

**B 4:17-5:2** The Old versus the New humanity.

**B' 5:3-14** The dark versus the light.

**B" 5:15-6:9** The foolish versus the wise, the Spirit influenced humanity.

**A' 6:10-20** The battle for the unity of the new humanity.

**A and A':** These sections correspond in that 4:1-16 brings the "unified new humanity" theme of chapters 1, 2, and 3 to a climactic summary and portrays the Messiah's body as a "mature man" who can stand firm against the "schemes" (4:14, 6:11) of hostile forces. This matches 6:10-20, which portrays the Messiah's body as a warrior who dons the metaphorical armor of the divine warrior in order to protect their unity and stand firm.

**B and B' and B'':** These sections each have at their core a single contrast between the old humanity and the new—explored from different angles. This contrasting "You are A so don't live like Z" pervades each of these units.

According to Dr. Tim Mackie, "Ephesians is an essay summarizing the most important apocalyptic event in history—Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit to bring new creation right here in the present world. And it is also a community's guide for comprehending and responding to the apocalypse of the crucified and risen King of the cosmos."

Vocabulary: plural *you*, *apocalypse*, *open-secret*

4In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the **mystery** of Christ, 5which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been **revealed** by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6This **mystery** is that through the gospel the nations are co-inheritors and co-body members and co-possessors of the promise in Messiah Jesus.

4In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the **open secret** of Christ, 5which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been **apocalypsed** by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6This **open secret** is that through the gospel the nations are co-inheritors and co-body members and co-possessors of the promise in Messiah Jesus.

Note how often Paul mentions God, Jesus, and Spirit in the same paragraph in the letter.

Look for Temple imagery.

Therefore, you are no longer foreigners and immigrants, but you are all fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of God's household family, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Messiah Jesus himself, in whom the entire building is being joined together. So that it can grow into a holy temple. In whom you too, are being built together into a dwelling-building of God, by means of the Spirit.

Note the many times Paul uses "in Christ" and "in Him." For Paul, being in Christ is both our identity and our location and our reality.