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C0414 -- April 7, 2004 -- Ephesians 1:1 -- Ephesus: City and Background

EPHESIANS: Background and City

MAJOR THEMES: Dispensation of the Church
 Angelic Conflict
 Unity
 Love

BACKGROUND: Why do we give background?

Because the only way to understand a piece of literature is by using the Grammatical-Historical or what we call the Literal Method of Interpretation; which means therefore that you have to understand the history behind the writing if you want to appreciate the content of the epistle.

REVIEW OF PAUL'S WRITINGS:

First, it's going to be my custom that when we study one of Paul's epistles that we review the whole corpus of Paul's writings in order to reveal the schedule of writing because you do not have in your Bibles the order in which his epistles were written. Therefore, you may be misled by certain believers who like to emphasize tongues and ecstatic experiences and who try to lead you to think that you're missing out on some great spiritual experience if you haven't had these emotions. The reason they do this is because they center everything around a couple of passages in Acts and some in 1 Cor. 12-14 not realizing the order that Paul wrote his epistles. So, let's look at the order and then fit Ephesians into the order because Ephesians is a very important dividing line in Paul's epistles.

Paul wrote his epistles in 3 groups. He didn't write them all at one time but it took many, many years and although the apostles wrote their epistles under divine inspiration and were infallible in their writings, nevertheless the apostles grew spiritually and there is therefore a progression in Paul's thought as Paul grew as the

Lord revealed new truth to him. It is quite evident that when Paul finished his ministry he knew a lot more than when he began.

1st Group: 6 Early Epistles (50-60AD)

1 Thess. - Bible Prophecy (elementary)

2 Thess. – Bible Prophecy (elementary)

1 Cor. (dealing with problems)

2 Cor. (dealing with problems)

Galatians – Law and Grace (fundamental for new believers)

Romans – Law and Grace (fundamental for new believers) – the 1st Systematic Theology, a legal brief. OT corollary is Deuteronomy.

2nd Group: 4 Prison Epistles (60-64AD) – most at 62 AD

Ephesians (advanced doctrine over 1st group)

Philippians (advanced doctrine “”)

Colossians

Philemon

Notice that only the 1st group have anything to do with tongues, the 2nd group has nothing to do with tongues. If it's some great spiritual experience and very advanced then why is it absent from these writings?

3rd Group: 3 Pastoral Epistles (written after Acts was finished, after the transition time)

1 Timothy (very important for Church; pure doctrine)

2 Timothy (very important for Church; pure doctrine)

Titus (very important for Church; pure doctrine)

The Pastorals are very important because they were written after the events of the Book of Acts were finished. And Acts is a transitional book. It is the first Church History book and it records the transition from Law to Grace or the Church. Since the transition was over Paul wrote the Pastorals in order to give us the normative for the Church. We don't go back to Acts to find out how the church is supposed to operate because by definition transitions are not the norm. To find the norm we go to the Pastoral Epistles of Paul. And there you will find sound and normative instruction for the Church. It is important to notice that these three epistles are almost purely doctrinal. There is very little about experience in the Pastoral Epistles.

SUMMARY OF PAUL'S WRITINGS

Now that we've given the sequence of Paul's writings do you see the trend of Paul's writings?

The 1st group was written during the transition zone between the dispensation of law and grace. Thus, you can see why tongues groups are wrong because 1 Cor. was written during the transition, during the events of Acts and transitions by definition are not normative. When the Church emerged from transition then the Pastoral Epistles emerged as the norm. So, if you want to find out how the church functions then ignore Acts and look at the Pastorals. Book of Acts is written to Theophilus, a Roman authority who was investigating Christianity, and it is for our edification through the understanding of certain points of history, dates, government entanglements, Roman policies and the foundation of the church. It is for us to understand the politics and society of the day in which the church began. This is one reason we're not going to get on that boat with the rest of the Charismatic movement. It's a satanic thing because what it is doing is taking God's word out of the historical context; twisting God's teaching and then parading it as the normal church life. And that is absolutely wrong. Nothing could be more dangerous and sinful than distorting God's word. The 3 groups might be likened to Baby Stage, Teenage Stage, and Adult Stage of the Church. What the Charismatics want us to do is go back to the Baby Stage and stay there in immaturity. Apparently that's where all the real spirituality is taking place and those who progress onto meat and doctrine are just the old fuddy duddies who take the Bible too seriously.

PAUL'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT MIRRORS HIS WRITINGS

Experiential Christianity → Doctrine/Experience → Pure Doctrine

So, Paul's life follows a decrease in experience and an increase in doctrine.

What we find is a decline of signs and an increase in wisdom (which is bible doctrine). While Paul was in his early ministry he was dealing with these signs such as tongues, healing, and miracles, particularly in a Jewish context, but that continually diminished and the wisdom principles began to increase along with his ministry to the Gentiles. The tendency in Paul's growth is to emphasize doctrine more and more as he develops and to leave all this experiential stuff. Why does Paul's ministry do this? Because Jews seek for signs and Greeks for wisdom (1 Cor. 1:22). Early on his ministry was directed toward the Jewish synagogue and signs

proving Jesus' Messiahship. But as his ministry expands there is a greater and greater percentage of Gentiles in the church. Finally the point is reached when these principles are just about peaked out here and that's about where Ephesians is written. Ephesians is written at a crisis period in the Church and in Paul's ministry. And it is because of this that Ephesians has been attacked by Liberals claiming it as non-Pauline. The reason is because this Epistles has zero specific application like the epistles in the 1st group. In other words, Paul is not dealing with problems that need specific attention. All the early epistles point to specific problems in a local church. Since Ephesians doesn't do this the liberals say it is non-Pauline. For example, we'll see them arguing that Paul doesn't mention people at the end of his letter, why not since he did in all his others? We'll answer these later on, but basically the answer is that this is the first time Paul is laying out the basis for Gentile Christianity. For the first time Paul is confronted with a tremendous Gentile revival in an Asian Province and for the first time Paul has to address the issue of thousands and thousands of Gentile Christians with no Jewish background. And this is the first time in the man's personal history that this has happened. Paul was accustomed to going into the Jewish Synagogues and speaking to people who know the OT but after the great revival there was such a large percentage of Gentile Christians that a new problem arose. How and where to ground a church that was almost 98% Gentile? What firm foundation can Paul give to a Gentile Church so they can find stability? He can't go to OT prophecy like he did in Romans 9-11, they don't have the background. What we're going to find is that Paul has to go back to Eternity Past to develop a basis for the Gentile. He has to peer into the eternal purposes of God. For the Jews he'd go back to Abraham and recount Israel's history but Gentiles have been out of the loop and so the only place to ground the predominantly Gentile Church is to go all the way back to Eternity Past to find the basis in God's plan and purpose via predestination and election. Here he is laying a base since they have no historical base. He's got to ground their faith in something and that sound base is God's Eternal Purpose.

STRUCTURE:

Notice the 1st 3 chapters are almost purely doctrine (1-3). Application, for the most part is general in this epistle (4-6), some specifics are addressed in chapter 5. Paul is not doing like many evangelicals who start with do's and don'ts. People become believers and all of a sudden everyone around them is imposing standards. Don't drink, don't smoke, don't dance and don't go with the girls that do. No, no, Paul doesn't start like that. That kind of approach would be meaningless to Gentile

converts in the 1st century. Instead, what he did was spend 3 full chapters, giving them the doctrine, giving them reasons for behaving as they should before the Lord. He's explaining the why's before he gives the what's. He ALWAYS grounds their life application in doctrinal reasons. You've heard the popular saying "It doesn't matter what you believe it's how you live". Paul couldn't have disagreed more. For Paul it was what you believe that dictated how you live and he's exactly right.

DESTINATION:

This is a Local Epistle as I'll show you when we get in the original text even though I'm aware that very few scholars take it to be local. Most of them take it to be an epistle with no address because a few Alexandrian manuscripts don't have "in Ephesus" in v. 1. But I'll show you how weak the manuscript evidence for such a view really is when we get there. Nevertheless, this issue doesn't really make a real difference in the applicability of this epistle. There's been more ink spent on whether this epistle was written to a local church or churches in Ephesus than any other issue in the book. But, the application is universal; it's for all Jewish and Gentile Christians without distinction or discrimination. Paul gives lots of theory here for the Christian but not much specific application. So, what you have is a large body of general teaching that covers the whole of the Christian experience left primarily up to you as to how you creatively apply the doctrine contained within. The total theory for the Christian life is here in this epistle. If you understand this epistle you're going to have the grounds for living the entire Christian life. And notice, tongues aren't mentioned in the epistle. I guess Paul didn't think it necessary.

GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMY, AND HISTORY:

Geographic Location of Ephesus (turn to a map in back of your Bible).

Ephesus on western edge of what is now called Turkey. To the North you have the Black Sea and Europe. Ephesus sits at the crossroads between Asia and Europe. Certain things are happening in Ephesus that are going to have impacts throughout the rest of Western History. In fact, some of these things are going to come to fruition in the Revived Roman Empire. Some of these things are happening in our country today. Certain things that have to do with demonism, mysticism (New Age Movement, Charismatic Movement), and ecumenical religion (WCC). Ephesus was called the "Gateway to Asia" because of its position. Notice the irregular coastland of western Asia.

Cayster River:

Along Ephesus you have this harbor. The Cayster River flows into this harbor. The Cayster was a source of blessing and cursing for those who lived in Ephesus. It was the source of blessing because it cut out the harbor allowing ships to come in with big business and also to avoid being smashed on rocks by storms. Additionally they had some large mountains that kept it rather calm and protected ships that harbored there. After the Cayster cut out the harbor it got nasty because it began to erode hills off to the southeast and these hills started falling apart breaking into pieces and falling into the river and gradually filling up the harbor. By the time Paul came to Ephesus about 50% of the harbor is useless. The large ships couldn't get into the harbor anymore. The Roman Army Engineers are desperately trying to cut the harbor out. Some scholars have suggested that this engineering project was the main reason Paul bypassed Ephesus and went to Miletus, calling the elders to meet him there (Acts 20:16-17). There was so much construction and blockage that Paul just went on by so he wouldn't be late for the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. They had a tremendous problem trying to dig this thing out and so finally the Romans just gave up and gradually as the silt built up in the harbor fewer and fewer ships were able to come into the harbor which meant that the city went into a recession.

Economy:

This ultimately resulted in an economic depression that never lifted. As the shipping business went south they discovered another way of making money: the selling of metal images of the Greek goddess Artemis (known to the Romans as Diana) or metal trinkets of parts of the temple. This became big business and provides the background for the silversmiths revolt in Acts 19 when Paul was there giving the gospel for some 2 ½ years. When Paul's ministry began to root out the idolatry in Ephesian residents this had a tremendous economic impact on the key economic business in Ephesus, namely idol selling. Boy, these Ephesian's were not going to have their prosperity taken out from under them again by some gospel preaching Jew. The other thing that kept the city going was demonism. You could learn just about any magic trick or see any magic trick if you were touring Ephesus in those days and it was pretty big business.

Tourism and Travel:

Going back to the big picture there was a Big Highway which ran southeast, not the Cayster River, but they paralleled one another goes south into Asia Minor and on through the Caucasian Mt Range and on into the Mesopotamian Valley. Ephesus was therefore the terminus of a great caravan route.

Summary:

Geographically this was the most important city in Asia, not the continent but the Roman Province. The population in Paul's day was about 350,000 people so this was a pretty big joint. One man's ministry had such a large impact economically that it caused a riot. One man and clear gospel preaching and teaching really stirred things up. This is fantastic. Paul was an extremely effective minister of the gospel as evidenced by his economic crippling of a major city. This city was also a tremendous spiritual battleground when Paul moved into the area. There were other rivers besides the Cayster River flowing into the Aegean Sea. The valleys were called by various names; one of them southeast of Ephesus was the most important in Christian history, known as the Lycus valley. In the middle was fought the greatest and first doctrinal battle that the Church ever fought: The battle with Gnosticism. Such cities as Collosae, Laodicea, and Hieropolis. These were sister churches to the Church in Ephesus. Ephesus was the first church listed in Rev. 2-3 where Jesus gives us his inspection report over some of these cities starting with Ephesus as Jesus gave a traveling report of the Lycus Valley churches. Let's look a little at the spiritual battle that was being fought there.

Great Temple of Artemis:

It surrounded a great temple that was there, it was one of the 7 Wonders of the World, it was the Temple of Diana or Artemis. We have a picture of Diana here down at the front. You might be shocked if you see this picture but here she is nevertheless in all her glory. Diana's temple was 360 feet x 180 wide. It was beautiful apparently because it had these huge columns that were made of various colored granites so that when you walked by and the sun reflected off these rocks you saw a beautiful shimmer of colors. This was a mystery of the ancient world how all these columns could be constructed of so many different kinds of minerals. It was burned in 366BC and re-built becoming one of the 7 Wonders of the World, lasting until 262AD. It lasted a long time, it was solidly erected and in that Temple were some of the most blasphemous religious practices ever! The layout of the city looks something like this. You have a long highway named the Arcadian Way; it

was 70 feet wide going down to the docks. Everyone who came to Ephesus walked down this street. At the end of this highway you have the Great Theatre. The Temple of Diana is off to the Northeast and the Great Stadium is to the north. The Stadium was built in the time when Paul was there. It was built to be a place for athletic competitions. The Theatre is mentioned in the book of Acts and held 25,000 people. As you can see, the city was a large, influential and powerful city. The religion moved west down the street toward the harbor and along the street you had all these silversmiths and it was here that the riot begins in the book of Acts. And it is this theatre where the crowds gather to indict Paul. You can imagine the size of the riot in a city that size and assembled in a theater that held 25,000 people. Here you have one man preaching the gospel for 2 ½ years causes a riot that fills a theatre with the entire population of Gillespie County. That's the kind of reaction that happened. These apostles literally turned the world upside down.

Sir William Ramsey started out as a critic of the Bible but as an archaeologist he became a strong conservative bible believer. He wrote this concerning his travels to Ephesus and exploration of it: "The superstition of all Asia was concentrated in Ephesus throughout the early centuries, the city mob, superstitious, uneducated, and frivolous, swayed by commonplace motives was everywhere the most dangerous and unfailing enemy of Christianity." You're going to see this again and again. You're going to see this time and again in cultures that have lots of religion. You're going to have mobs and anytime you have mobs you always have it oriented against Christianity or Christian principles. Time and again there are mobs that cry out for Free Speech for the Homosexuals but treat Christians and their Bible's as Hate Speech. Pretty soon that Bible you're carrying is going to be confiscated and burned and how much of it are you going to stand for? How much of it are you going to have hidden away in your heart so you can withstand the persecution? It's coming.

HOW EVANGELISM SPREAD INTO ASIA:

SEED PLANTING ON PENTECOST: ACTS 2:9

Acts 2:9: Notice those present on Pentecost. When God works the results always are lasting. What had happened is that you had people from all over the ancient world come to Jerusalem and the apostles had been told to wait, not because waiting would earn the Holy Spirit, but they were told to wait in one place, Jerusalem, because at that time the Holy Spirit was scheduled to come at a specific time and Christ wanted them there when it happened. They weren't called to earn the Holy

Spirit; they were simply called to follow Christ's command. Notice v. 9 (READ) and specifically the last place mentioned: Asia. We don't know how many individuals there were, maybe a couple of hundred, probably less, of these Hellenistic Jews from Asia, heard the gospel in their own language. After Pentecost these individuals from Asia went back home, either by boat or by land through Antioch. They may not have been converted but at least the seed was sown and it is because those seeds were sown that Paul was able to have this impact when he got to Ephesus some 30 years later. Seed planting to harvest often takes a long time.

EVANGELISM FORBIDDEN: ACTS 16:6-10

Now I want to show you how God's time schedule for evangelization was so frustrating that it almost got Paul out of fellowship and yet when Paul followed God's timetable there was a revival like the world had never seen. Let's go to the next passage having to do with this,

Acts 16:6-10: This is the 2nd Missionary Journey of Paul and he's been through several cities and finally in v. 6 we (READ). God lead Paul up into these regions having a large impact and they were so very close to Ephesus but the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to speak the word to those in Asia. Paul said, I want to go into Asia and continue seeing these effects of God's word and the Holy Spirit says "No". Paul says what about the Great Commission, "Go unto all the nations", let's go and the Holy Spirit says "No, now is not the time." Paul was given a red light. Why? There were 3 reasons it was not time to go to Asia: 1) Higher priority work elsewhere, namely in Europe (cf. v. 9). Notice that if Paul had disobeyed he would have been out of fellowship because he desired to preach the gospel at the wrong place and time. 2) There must have been a lack of positive volition in the area, there was extreme negative volition and God just said, no, God never respects negative volition, and 3) Paul was not ready yet to cope with the problems, he needed some time to grow up spiritually before such a task. I say this because after the revival happens in Asia Paul has a tremendous problem to face and this epistle is a direct result of that problem after he left Ephesus.

THE PROBLEM: HOW TO GROUND GENTILE CHRISTIANITY

What do I do when I have thousands and thousands of Gentiles converting without a shred of background knowledge?

EVANGELISM PREPARATION: 18:2, 18-21

Acts 18:18-21: In this chapter Paul picks up a couple, named Priscilla and Aquila. Priscilla is the lady and interestingly her name comes first rather than her husbands, the reason is because of v. 2 (read). We don't know how Paul found him but he did and apparently Aquila was a commoner whereas Priscilla was of a noble clan. So, here you had a noblewoman married to a common man and, because Luke was the author and he was a very careful author, he follows a very formal Greek style. Luke has the best grammar of any NT author. Part of formal Greek dictated that nobility be named before commoners and because Priscilla was a noble he honored that nobility by placing her name first. This is very rare in the Scriptures; usually it's the male name first. Now let's pick up in v. 18-19a (READ). So, Paul takes this Jewish couple and takes them to Ephesus and leaves them there. So, what Paul is doing is leaving this couple there to get things started, sow some seed, evangelize so that when Paul comes back the people will be ready to hear Paul's message. READ v. 19b-21 where you see Paul going into the synagogues and reasoning with the Jews. As you can see many wanted him to stay longer but he consented not and he left. Now, isn't this interesting; Paul comes right up to the door of Ephesus and higher priority takes him elsewhere. Instead he follows divine guidance and refuses to go in the open door. Not all open doors in the Christian life mean go, he, following Scriptural principles for divine guidance rejected the door because it wasn't time.

CONTINUED SEED PLANTING VIA AQUILA AND PRISCILLA: ACTS 18:24

Now for Acts 18:24. Now, remember, Paul is not there, Priscilla and Aquila are there in his stead preparing the way. Here they run into one of the most interesting men in the NT, Apollos. READ 18:24-25, "being acquainted only with the baptism of John;" This is the first thing to recognize about Ephesus. You've got a lot of cooks running around Ephesus, even believers have problems here. They don't have a clue as to what's happened in the last 40 years. Nevertheless, this man, Apollos, is a mighty man of God and he is living in the Old Dispensation of the Law. He's been briefed by John the Baptist on the gospel of the Kingdom and that Jesus is about to come but he doesn't know that Jesus has already come. He's still waiting. It's because of problems like this that some groups still follow John the Baptist rather than Christ (e.g. Greek Orthodox magnify John the Baptist, as well as some Middle Eastern groups who still consider John the Baptist as their prophet). Thus, he's still living as an OT saint being well-schooled in the Scriptures (READ v. 26).

What's happened is that Priscilla and Aquila have recognized positive volition, Apollos wanted to know the word of God, and they felt it necessary to further this man's knowledge. What was the result? READ v. 27b-28. Now, it's because of how powerful this Apollos was and how irrefutable his arguments that many people think he's the author of a NT book. Do you know which one it is? It's the book that shows that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah and uses the OT in a very detailed way.....Anyone know what book? Hebrews, right. He's such a fantastic orator that Apollos is put forth in 1 Cor. 3 as better than Paul by some. This guy was an amazing believer, a pure genius of the Scriptures. He was far more eloquent than Paul and people saw it.

Continue READING Acts 19 Now Paul has arrived in Ephesus and he comes into contact with the same thing Priscilla and Aquila did. Paul runs into some odd believers that don't have the whole message. So, Paul filled them in on the new details and they were water baptized BEFORE they were Spirit baptized. Why do you think that is? These too were living under the Old Dispensation. But, I want you to see something; there are some odd things that happened in Ephesus even to believers. Later on one of the gospels was written from Ephesus and again is very odd and much like the book of Hebrews, anyone know what Gospel was written *from* Ephesus?..... The Gospel of John. John's Gospel specifically notes the decrease of John the Baptist and the increase of Jesus Christ (John 1:15-42). But here in Acts 19 we are finally seeing the first signs of positive volition in Ephesus. Now notice vs. 8-10.

How did Paul evangelize the world? Did he go knocking on doors? No! How then did he do it?

READ v. 8-9a: First he went to the synagogue and the Jews showed negative volition to the word. This anger is going to follow Paul to Jerusalem later on when he shows up for Pentecost. These same Jews try to indict him later for his ministry in Ephesus (Acts 21:27-29). This was a powerful ministry. So, Paul left and went to a man in Ephesus who had a lecture hall, his name was Tyrannus. Paul would spend from sunrise to 12 noon working on tents. But from 12 noon to 6pm (supper time) people didn't work because it was too hot. So, what Paul did with his time was he taught in the school of Tyrannus (READ v. 10). He did this for 2 years every day, that's right, he taught 5 hours a day! Bible doctrine after bible doctrine so that Paul's conclusion of this ministry was that "he did not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God" to the Ephesians. That's right! Paul taught the whole counsel

of God to the Ephesians in the space of 2 ½ years. Now you see how he got such a large following, ALL ASIA heard the word of the LORD.

RIOT OVER ARTEMIS: 19:23-41

READ about the opposition that came about in 19:23-24. A riot happened. This made a lot of the 350,000 people very angry. So angry that 25,000 people filled the theatre. Sermonettes for Christianettes don't stir up 25,000 people into a riot. Paul was teaching 5-6 hours a day, doctrine after doctrine, not 5 minute mickey mouse feel good services, but pounding bible teaching. That's what caused an uprising and a 25,000 person riot in Ephesus. Most people can't even listen for 5 seconds today. The leader of this riot was Demetrius. Demetrius was a top dog not some little yip yap. These guys were making money, they'd lost their harbor and so they were living off tourists of the Temple of Diana and the trinkets they sold. He was running some big business. READ v. 25-27 commenting on Paul's ministry. This Demetrius doesn't care about Artemis he cares about the money but he throws in this apparent concern to make him look concerned and caring. Bologna, he cares about the money, this is just propaganda. Notice, one man teaching 5 hours a day for 2 years caused this uprising in READ v. 28. The people began chanting their slogan about Artemis of the Ephesians. READ v. 29 the WHOLE CITY was filled with confusion. 350,000 people. READ down to 33, then skip to 35. The town clerk (Gk. *grammatea*) was unknown until recently, but now it is know that he was the representative of Caesar, and he would get blamed if something got torn up because of the riot. Thus, in the face of disobedience he steps in to take control of the uproar. What he says in essence is that we're going to follow due process here. We're not going to allow things to be solved by riotous idiots because I'm responsible for the mess. Now, do you have any legal claims against these men? Do you have any legal problems with him? If so let's solve it, if not then go home. In the NT it's always law and order over riot and disorder.

MAGIC AND DEMONISM IN EPHESUS: ACTS 19:11-20

READ 19:11-12: Here Paul is demonstrating the superior power of God over the Ephesian magicians. The Ephesian magicians would use costly items in their magic tricks to try to manipulate human emotions. Paul used handkerchiefs and aprons, everyday items. Evil spirits were not being used for magic but being cast out of people. But what happened? What was the local response? READ 13-14: Some locals thought they would try to use Jesus as a charm to repeat the miracles done

through Paul. READ 15-16: This failed miserably and resulted in further harm to those who tried to use Jesus' name in such a blasphemous way. READ 17-20 commenting. Here Paul made a major dent in the educational program of Ephesus which was steeped in demonism. Many of the books which may have been a part of the local library were destroyed.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EPHESIAN CHURCH? REV. 2:1-7

Summarize the whole thing from Rev. 2:1-7: This is Jesus' inspection of the Asian Churches some 30 years later: Major on v. 2 and the word "test". These guys were careful bible students and they tested people who tried to come in and teach strange doctrines. They carefully monitored what was taught and they were good at it, they were commended for it. If they were doing "tests" then that indicates a standard. What was their standard? They followed the standard of the word. We're going to find that later in Ephesians Paul will teach that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against princes and principalities who carry strange doctrines. IOW's back behind this whole thing is the angelic conflict. And demonic powers want to shape your doctrine in such a way that you're an ineffective believer. They want to sterilize your witness. v. 3, it wasn't easy they went to extreme pains to keep these false doctrines out of the Church but v. 4 indicates that they have left their "first love". "First love" in the context is not Jesus Christ but doctrine. They are leaving doctrine, and in leaving doctrine they're leaving Jesus Christ as well. They're loosening up the standards and what's going to happen if they leave doctrine is they'll let false teachers in and so they are warned to get back on doctrine and stick to the course. Stop slacking off. Today there is no church of Ephesus. Ephesus is in ruins. The Lord warned that He would remove their lampstand and He did. They loosened up to the point where the Lord said, "that's enough, I've had it" and the church went out of business.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO THE EPISTLE OF EPHESIANS?

1. The epistle gives us hope for evangelism at the right time and place. It's not always time to do evangelism. It's always time to follow divine will as revealed through doctrine. Sometimes he hinders and sometimes he doesn't but it's his timing not ours.

2. Well, It's no accident that Paul uses temple imagery in Ephesians. What Paul is doing is contrasting this great pagan Temple of Artemis with the Church as a Temple (2:21). Paul also warns us against idolatry (5:5).

3. It's also no accident that Paul will talk about Christ's superiority over the demonic realm (1:21), our past deadness in sin and slavery to the demonic realm (2:1-2), the victory of Christ's death over the demonic realm signified by the Ascension (4:8-10). No wonder Paul warns us not to give the devil an opportunity (4:27) and finally to put on the full armor of God because our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the demonic realm (Eph. 6:10-17).

I hope you see now why we need the background for the epistle. It's so you will receive the full thrust of this epistle in its historical context.

[Back To The Top](#)

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