



TITLE:

Ephesians: Background

TEXT:

Ephesians 1:3; 3:8; 4:1

LOCATION:



- Ephesus is located near the mouth of the Cayster River on the Aegean coast of present-day Turkey.
- It was the leading city in the Roman province of Asia.
- It is the marketplace of Asia, being the last stop of the great overland trade routes from the far east as well as the grain shipments from Egypt. Because of this, Ephesus was a cosmopolitan and extremely wealthy city.
- The world capital of the slave trade from around 100 B.C. to 100 A.D.
- The people are dominated by the worship of Artemis (known as Diana in Roman mythology). The Temple of Diana at Ephesus was the first to be entirely of marble and one of the largest Greek temples ever built, measuring some 377 feet (115 meters) in length and 180 feet (55 meters) wide.
- The worship of Artemis was linked to occult practices such as sorcery, exorcisms, astrology, and black magic.
- The location of one of the largest theaters in the ancient world, seating over 25,000 people.

THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS:

- Paul visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey and returned on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-7), finding a group of John the Baptist's disciples. These 12 believers became the nucleus of the Ephesian church.
- Paul stayed in Ephesus for 3 years, ministering to the people and teaching them the Word such that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus"(Acts 19:10).
- It was during this time that the other churches in Asia Minor were planted.
- Many came to Christ such that those involved in magic and evil practices stopped (Acts 19:19).
- The word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing in Ephesus (Acts 19:20). As a result, Demetrius, a silversmith who made a large amount of money making and selling idols, incited a riot because the progress of the gospel was putting a dent in his business (Acts 19:21-41).
- For several years, the church in Ephesus flourished and became a great light in the whole of Asia Minor. They were a solid church in that Paul even commended them for their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for the saints (Eph 1:15).

- Paul, Timothy (1 Tim 1:3), Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:16, 18), Tychicus (2 Tim 4:12), and Apostle John - all of them ministered to the church at Ephesus.
- Eight New Testament books—Gospel of John, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation—were written for the church at Ephesus.

AUTHOR:

- Apostle Paul (1:1, 3:1).
- The book of Ephesians was written (between 61 and 63 A.D.) by Paul while he was in prison in Rome (3:1, 4:1, 6:20).
- The epistle was carried to Asia along with the letters to the Colossians and Philemon by Tychicus (6:21).
- The letter follows a typical Pauline format:
 - Greetings (1:1-2) -> Doctrinal Content (1:3 - 3:21) -> Practical Application (4:1 - 6:20) -> Personal Matters (6:21-24).
- Ephesians and Colossians are known as the "Twin Epistles". 50% of what is written in the book of Ephesians is found in the book of Colossians.

RECIPIENT:

- The letter was addressed to the church at Ephesus. 1:1
 - The Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus omit the Greek words "en epheso" (at Ephesus) in 1:1. Those that embraced Critical Text say that the recipient of the epistle is the general church and catholic.
- The epistle was intended for wider circulation throughout Asia.
- The Ephesus church consists predominantly of Greeks (Gentiles), with a likely presence of some Jewish members. Acts 19:10; Eph. 2:11.

PURPOSE:

- The epistle appears to be "preventative" rather than "corrective." In contrast to the letter to the Colossians, where Paul addressed specific errors present in Colossae.
- Paul wrote to the Ephesian church to safeguard the believers from the errors (specifically Gnosticism and Judaic Heresy) present in the Colossian church. He anticipates that these errors will also affect the church in Ephesus. Compare Acts 20:29-30.

THEME:

- Because of our position in Christ in heavenly places, we have to walk with Christ on earth.

OUTLINE:

- Chapter 1-3: Our position in Christ in heavenly places.
- Chapter 4-6: Our walk with Christ on earth.

Notice the words "I therefore" in Eph. 4:1.

ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE EPHESIANS:

- The church is local and not universal (1:1).
- The church is composed of saints and faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1).
- Jesus Christ is the head over all things to the church (1:22).
- The church is the body of Christ (1:23).
- The church is described as the household of God (2:19).
- The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ is the corner stone (2:20).
- The church is described as an holy temple in the Lord (1:21).
- The church is described as the habitation of God through the Spirit (1:22).
- The church is a mystery. The mystery of the church as the body of Christ composed of saved Jews and Gentiles of this age (3:2-7; 5:32).
- God is to receive glory in the church. The church is the agency through which the Lord receives glory in this dispensation (3:21).
- God bestows gifts and individuals upon the church (4:7-15).
- The church is described as a body (4:16).
- The marital union between a husband and wife symbolizes the spiritual union between Christ and the church (5:32).