

Ephesians

Introduction, Background, and Argument

1. Title and Destination

1.1 ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ - “To the Ephesians”

1.2 Ephesus was the major port city on the west coast of Asia Minor known as the “Gateway to Asia.”

1.3 Ephesus had a well-protected canal and harbor that brought a lot of economic wealth.

1.4 The canal and harbor had begun to fill with silt from the Cayster River, thus slowing economic growth by trade. The Roman engineers attempted to dredge the harbor to save the economy, but their attempts were unsuccessful.

1.5 The locals turned to tourism with a focus on the Temple of Artemis to save the economy.

1.6 Artemis was the goddess of childbirth and midwifery portrayed as many-bejeweled.

1.7 Silversmiths and other artisan guilds filled the streets in order to make money off selling souvenirs to tourists.

1.8 Magic and religious occultism prevailed in Ephesus.

1.9 The church was likely founded by Jews from Asia who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9).

1.10 Paul sent Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus intending to come himself at a later time (Acts 18:1, 18, 19).

1.11 Apollos mightily defended Jesus as the Messiah and refuted the Jews at Ephesus (Acts 18:28).

1.12 Paul arrived in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1ff). He spent three years there teaching daily for two years in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10).

1.13 The influence of the word of God was so great in Asia that it seriously affected the silversmith and other artisan guilds that were dependent on Artemis and magic to make money.

1.14 A mob was stirred up against Paul that left the city in confusion.

1.15 Timothy became the pastor at Ephesus. Church history says that John became the pastor after him and was arrested in Ephesus and taken to the isle of Patmos where he wrote the Revelation (Rev 1:9).

2. Authorship

2.1 Paul mentions himself twice as the author (1:1; 3:1)

2.2 Early church tradition cites Paul

2.2.1 Ignatius

2.2.2 Polycarp

2.2.3 Irenaeus

2.2.4 Clement of Alexandria

2.2.5 Clement of Rome

- 2.2.6 Tertullian
- 2.2.7 Marcion
- 2.2.8 Hippolytus
- 2.2.9 the Muratorian Canon
- 2.2.10 Hermas
- 2.2.11 Barnabas
- 2.2.12 Origen

2.3 The style is Pauline in many respects such as introduction, description, apostolicity, elements of the letter

2.4 The letter is very similar to Colossians.

3. Date

3.1 AD60-61

3.2 Paul wrote during his first imprisonment while under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16-31). He mentions being a prisoner or in chains several times (3:1; 4:1; 6:20).

3.3 Paul was able to receive visitors and preach the gospel during his first imprisonment (6:18-20; Acts 28:16-31).

3.4 Ephesians is very similar to Colossians which may indicate they were written about the same time.

3.5 Ephesians and Colossians were both couriered by Tychicus to their respective destinations (6:21; Col 4:7-9).

4. Occasion

No specific occasion is clear for Paul writing the letter.

5. Purpose(s) of Writing

5.1 There was some anti-Semitism in Ephesus (Acts 19:33-34), so Paul wrote to show the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church, which is the body of Christ.

5.2 The book places a large emphasis on loving one another (cf 1:4, 6; 3:14-21; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:1-6; 6:23-24). Also see later when they left their first love (Rev 2:4).

6. Argument

Jewish and Gentile believers are united in Christ by means of the plan of the Father, the execution of the Son, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit. They should advance in knowledge of God's power knowing that we were all dead in our trespasses and sins but saved by grace through faith in order to do good works. Christ took down the barrier between Jew and Gentile so that the two are one new man in Christ being built as a dwelling of the Spirit. Gentiles are now co-heirs, co-members and co-partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel, a mystery which had been hidden in ages past but now revealed. They need to know the love of Christ and God's power toward us.

Jewish and Gentile believers need to walk in unity, walk according to the new man, walk in love, walk in the light, walk in wisdom and stand in battle, praying at all times. Our heavenly position in Christ needs to become an earthly reality.

7. Themes

7.1 The theme is that all believers are “in Christ.”

7.2 A sub-theme is that all believers should strive to live in unity.

8. Outline

8.1 Nature of the Church (1-3)

8.2 Walk of the Church (4-6)

9. Uniquenesses

9.1 Ephesians has many parallels with Colossians.

9.2 Ephesians has eight very long sentences.

9.3 Ephesians has more prayers of the apostle Paul than any other letter (1:15-23; 3:1, 14-21)

9.4 The expression “in Christ” or an equivalent (e.g. in Him, in the Christ, in the Lord, in the Lord Jesus, in whom) is used 36 times in Ephesians to explain the believers relationship to Christ.

9.5 1/6th of all Paul’s references to love are in Ephesians.

9.6 The Ephesians received four canonical books (Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Revelation).

9.7 Ephesians is the key book on the church.

9.8 Ephesians explains the mystery nature of the church where Jew and Gentile are co-heirs.

9.9 Ephesians is the second most theological letter of the apostle Paul, with Romans being the first.

9.10 Ephesians gives the most extended treatment of the armor of God in Paul’s writings.

9.11 Ephesians describes the spiritual blessings we have in the heavenlies in Christ.

9.12 Ephesians is one of the most Trinitarian NT epistles (1:3-14; 2:17-18; 4:3-7)

10. Controversial Passages

10.1 Ephesians 1:1, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, **To** the saints who are at Ephesus and *who are* faithful in Christ Jesus:”

10.2 Ephesians 1:4, “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love”

10.3 Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

10.4 Ephesians 3:2-6, “²if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; ³that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. ⁴By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶*to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel...”

11. Keys to Ephesians

11.1 Key Word: Church

11.2 Key Verse: Eph 2:8-9

11.3 Key Idea: Jewish and Gentile believers are united in their heavenly position “in Christ” and now need to walk in their earthly lives in accordance with their position.