

Outline of Ephesians

An outline of Ephesians intended to enhance and assist your study of God's holy Word — His letter to you.

Author: Paul vs. 1

Date: Ephesians was written around 62 A.D.

Recipients: Ephesians, vs. 1

There has been some debate about whether this book was written to the Ephesians or was a circular letter to various churches, because not all manuscripts include the words "in Ephesus." Sinaiticus & Vaticanus (both 4th century New Testament documents), do not include the words "in Ephesus." Marcion (mid-second-century heretic), Tertullian (early third-century bishop), and Origen (late second-century apologist), also do not include the words "in Ephesus" with verse 1. Based upon this evidence and because there are no strong words of endearment expressed by Paul to the Ephesians, even though Paul spent three years there, and because 1:15 seems to indicate that Paul did not know the readers personally, and for some other lesser reasons, some have considered the letter to be a circular one, generally intended for the churches in the region of Asia Minor. However, all versions in other languages from the Italian, Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Gothic contained the words "in Ephesus," including almost all other Greek manuscripts. Moreover, all Greek manuscripts, even those that do not contain the words "in Ephesus," title this book "To the Ephesians." The words "To Ephesus" are clearly at the top on the oldest manuscript, p. 46, contained at the University of Michigan Library. Ireneus, 202 A.D., states that this was the Epistle to the Ephesians. Clement of Alexandria, 215 A.D., cites this as the Epistle to the Ephesians. Tertullian, while not including the words, strongly disputes Marcion for changing the title. Marcion's title was "To the Laodiceans." Everyone, except for Marcion, who was a heretic, believed that this was a letter to the Ephesians, until you come down to the 19th century. I find the evidence overwhelming that the letter was not a circular letter, but rather was a specific letter written to a specific church, the church at Ephesus.

Date:

Around 60-62 A.D. The letter is written from prison. Both in 3:1 and 4:1 Paul described himself as a prisoner. In 6:20 he stated that he was an ambassador in chains. Its similarity with the book of Colossians probably means that they were written around the same time. In fact, the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon were written, most likely, around the same time. They are the prison epistles.

The Background:

Paul spent three full years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). A brief summary of Paul's time in Ephesus is given for us in Acts 19. In 1 Corinthians 16:9, Paul stated that a great and effective door had been opened for him at Ephesus. Some would dispute that opened and closed doors is a way to determine the will of God for their lives. Paul seemed to have no problem with understanding that when God opens the door, we are to do the work. Opened doors, however, do not mean that there are not adversaries, as Paul stated.

Now about the adversaries, much can be said. Paul did not have an easy time at Ephesus. At the time he wrote 2 Corinthians 11:23, we have only one recorded imprisonment of Paul — at Philippi. Yet, he stated that he had been in prisons often. Much of the persecution that Paul faced was never recorded. In 1 Corinthians 15:32, Paul stated that he fought the wild beasts at Ephesus. Some have interpreted this to be an allusion to men. But perhaps it is a direct reference to literal animals, since Paul generally calls men as men. If so, it may mean that Paul was thrown into the great arena at Ephesus. Many believe that the words found in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 reference Paul's stay in Ephesus. What happened in Ephesus caused Paul to despair even of life.

After leaving Ephesus in 55 A.D., Paul went to Corinth and wintered there. There, he wrote the letter to the Romans, in which he stated that Priscilla and Aquila risked their own necks for his life. Apparently, this took place at Ephesus. There is a tradition, found in several traces, that Paul had an encounter with a lion at Ephesus. This tradition dates from the mid-second century A.D. Yet, Acts is silent about any of these things.

Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19 — around 51 A.D. — less than 20 years after the death and resurrection of Christ). He left Priscilla and Aquila there at Ephesus while Paul went on to Jerusalem. At this time, Apollos was converted in Ephesus by Priscilla and Aquila. Apollos then went to Corinth and gained quite a following for Christ. In Acts 18:23, Paul began his third missionary journey. He traveled across modern Turkey on land and came back to Ephesus. When he arrived, (probably in 52 A.D.) he found around 12 disciples of John the Baptist who may have been converted by Apollos. These received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands by Paul. Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. Some of the Jews did not believe but hardened their hearts and spoke evil of the Way. Paul did not stay in the synagogue, but rather withdrew the disciples from the synagogue and moved them to a school. He taught these disciples for two years. So effective was Paul's teaching that through this ministry all those who dwelt in Asia (a province of Rome in Asia Minor — approximately the Western quarter of modern Turkey; all the churches in Revelation were in Asia; Colossai & Laodicea are located there) heard the gospel. Undoubtedly, this was the time the Laodicean and Colossian churches were founded. Altogether Paul spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). After this time (around 55 A.D.), Paul went briefly into Europe again, stayed three months (where he wrote the letter to the Romans) and then by boat headed for Jerusalem. In Acts 20:17-38, we have the account of Paul landing at Miletus and calling for the Ephesian elders, 30 miles away, to meet him there (in the Spring of 56 A.D.). While the elders were there, Paul described his ministry. He served the Lord with humility and many tears and trials, taught publicly and from house to house. His message was repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He declared to them the whole counsel of God, keeping nothing back. He ministered night and day with tears. He worked while he was there.

Thereafter, Paul went to Jerusalem, was taken captive, appealed to Caesar and was brought to Rome in around 59 or 60 A.D. The epistle was probably written around 62 A.D., during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.

Ephesus was a pagan city of approximately 250,000 inhabitants. It was considered one of the most sacred cities of antiquity. A magnificent statue fashioned from a meteorite was in the temple of Artemis (Diana — Roman name). The temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city had a long history and its origins are clouded in a legend involving the Amazons. In 1044 B.C., it was conquered by the Athenians, then in 560 it was conquered by the Lydians and in 546 it fell to the Persians. In 334 B.C., the city fell back under Greek influence. In 133 B.C., the city came under the influence of Rome, but was not finally subjected until 41 B.C. by Mark Antony. It thereafter began to flourish and became a great city until it was sacked by the Goths in 262 A.D.

Paul labored in the city for three years. He appointed Timothy as the bishop of the city when he left (1 Timothy 1:3). The city became the residence of the Apostle John in the last years of his life. Apparently, Mary, the mother of Jesus, spent her last years here as well with John. A great church council was held here in the Church of the Virgin Mary in 431 A.D., a building which still stands.

The Book of Revelation was written to the church at Ephesus, warning them to regain their first love. It was at Ephesus that John saw Cerinthus, an early heretic in the church who denied the incarnation, at a public bath. John fled, saying, "Let us flee, for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." Today, there is only a small village at the site.

Theme: The Manifesto of the Church

Structure:

This book easily divides into two main divisions: Our Position (1-3) and Our Walk (4-6). It stresses our place and

purpose in the church.

I. Introduction 1:1-2

II. Our Position 1:3-3:21

A. Our Spiritual Blessings 1:3-14

1. Chosen to be holy and without blame
2. Predestined to be adopted
3. Accepted in the Beloved
4. Redemption through His blood
5. Sins forgiven
6. Abundant grace
7. Knowledge of His will
8. A guaranteed inheritance
9. Predestined to be to the praise of His glory
10. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise

B. Prayer for Wisdom 1:15-23

1. To know the hope of His calling
2. To know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in us
3. To know the exceeding greatness of His power toward us

C. Made Alive to Work 2:1-10

1. We were dead
2. We have been made alive
3. We have been seated in heaven
4. We have become trophies of His grace
5. By grace we are saved through faith, not by works
6. We are created to do good works

D. Jews and Gentiles—One Church 2:11-3:13

1. Gentiles were strangers from the promise
2. But now are brought into the same promise and covenant through the blood of Christ
3. He is our Peace, He made peace, He preached peace
4. The church, Jews and Gentiles, is the growing dwelling place of God
5. Was a mystery in times past, but now revealed to the apostles and prophets
6. For the purpose of displaying the manifold wisdom of God to angelic beings

E. Prayer for the surpassing person of God to be real to us

1. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit
2. That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith
3. To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge

4. To be filled with all of the fullness of God
5. Exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think

III. The Walk

- A. The call for unity 4:1-6
 1. One body 4:4
 2. One Spirit 4:4
 3. One hope 4:4
 4. One Lord 4:5
 5. One faith 4:5
 6. One baptism 4:5
 7. One God and Father 4:6
- B. The role of dissimilar gifts in the unity scheme 4:7-16
- C. A new you, a new life in Christ 4:17-24
- D. Rules of conduct 4:25-32
 1. Don't lie/speak truth 4:25
 2. Don't be angry 4:26
 3. Don't give the devil an opportunity 4:27
 4. Don't steal/work 4:28
 5. Don't speak ill/but what is necessary to build up 4:29
 6. Don't grieve the Spirit 4:31
 7. Don't be controlled by evil emotions/but by kindness 4:32
- E. Imitate God 5:1-33
 1. By walking in love 5:1-7
 2. By walking in light 5:8-14
 3. By walking in precision 5:15-21
 4. By honoring your marriage 5:22-33
- F. Relate properly to others 6:1-9
 1. Parent-child relationship 6:1-4
 2. Servant-master relationship 6:5-9
- G. The armor of God 6:10-20
 1. The purpose of the armor 6:10-13
 2. Belt of truth 6:14
 3. Breastplate of righteousness 6:14
 4. Shoes of the good news of peaces 6:15
 5. Shield of faith 6:16
 6. Helmet of salvation 6:17
 7. Sword of the Spirit 6:17

IV. Closing 6:21-24

Key Passage: Ephesians 2:8-10

Key Thought: Jesus Christ. He is referenced directly in this short letter some 100 times.

Additional Notes:

To take Jesus Christ out of Ephesians is to gut completely the letter.

The letter contains a great passage on salvation, on sanctification, on spiritual warfare, on Jesus Christ.

There are two great prayers in this book — 1:15-23; 3:14-21. A major problem in the church was a problem with love. 1 Timothy 1:5; Revelation 2:4. More than one-sixth of all references Paul makes to love are found in this one little book — 19 references. He mentions the word in this book more than in any other book, including Romans and 2 Corinthians. We reach the word first in verse 4, and it is found in every chapter.

The letter does not address any particular problem but is an overall doctrinal treatise for the church.

Verses 3 through 14 constitute a 202 word sentence in Greek.