

Ephesians - Introduction & Background

Authorship

External evidence for Pauline authorship of Ephesians is strong. External sources favoring Pauline authorship include Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Marcion, Hippolytus, the Muratorian Canon, Hermas, Barnabas, and Origen. So strong is this external evidence that acceptance of Pauline authorship was virtually unanimous until the higher critical movement of the 19th century.

Various pieces of *internal* evidence also favor Pauline authorship. The book identifies Paul as the author twice (1:1; 3:1). Interestingly, the author's name reappears. This same phenomenon occurs in some of Paul's other letters that are inarguably authentic (Gal 5:2; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Cor 10:1; Col 1:23). Moreover, the typical introductory items so prevalent in Paul's other letters appear also in Ephesians. Such items include the writer's description of himself as an apostle and prisoner (1:1; 3:1; 6:20). The writer also describes himself as an apostle by the will of God (1:1; Gal 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Col 1:1). Another similarity with Paul is the writer's low estimate of his apostolic status (3:8; 1 Cor 15:9-10). The style of Ephesians is distinctly Pauline as it contains the following elements: salutation, thanksgiving, doctrine, application, closing personal remarks, and benediction. Ephesians also bears a striking similarity to Colossians. Both books are similar in terms of content, vocabulary, and time of composition. Of the 155 verses in Ephesians, the content of 78 of them are repeated in Colossians.

Despite such internal evidence, many contend that other internal evidence goes against Pauline authorship. However, most of these arguments have been answered. For example, some point out the differences between Ephesians and Colossians. Yet, as explained above, the similarities seem to outweigh any differences between the two. Moreover, others argue that Ephesians contains certain words not found in Paul's other letters.

However, this objection can be rebutted by noting the following: there is a similar vocabulary (grace, adoption, holy) and theology (justification by faith alone) with Paul's other writings, similar differences can be observed in between Galatians and Philippians, and Paul may have used amanuensis. In addition, some observe a different style in comparison to Paul's other letters. Such differences in style include long sentences and repeated synonyms. However, a comparison of Romans and 2 Corinthians demonstrates that the style of Paul's letters varies greatly depending upon the circumstances. Finally, some see a theological difference between Ephesians and Paul's other writings. The cosmic reign of Christ and the universal nature of the church exemplify such differences.

However, these theological concepts could be the product of a maturation of Paul's theological outlook and his continued meditation upon the universal nature of the church. If Paul did not write Ephesians, then who wrote it? Opponents of Pauline authorship contend that it is a pseudonymous writing that was the product of one of Paul's disciples. However, this thesis is tenuous in light of the fact that pseudonymity was not practiced by the early church. Moreover, Ephesians has been dubbed the greatest of Paul's writings. How could such a magnificent book have been written by one of Paul's disciples rather than Paul himself?

Destination

The letter was written to the saints at Ephesus (1:1). The Athenians colonized Ephesus in the 11th century BC. The Persians, Macedonians, and Romans subsequently conquered the city. After being destroyed by a fire in 356 BC, the city was rebuilt. It was rebuilt because of pride as well as its strategic location. The city was located on the banks of the Cayaster River on the east of the Aegean Sea. The city became the chief port of Asia as well as the religious, commercial, and political center of this region. The city was the home of a 25,000 seat theatre, a racecourse, and the temple of Artemis (Greek name) or Diana (Roman name). This temple, which housed numerous prostitutes, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Acts 19:35ff). The city owed much of its local economy and preoccupation with pagan sorcery to the Temple of Diana. The city was also the home of a number of zealous and prejudicial Jews (Acts 2:9; 6:9; 19:8,10; 21:27-32). Ephesus, which was the home of the Olympics, boasted a half a million people in Paul's day.

Paul desired to preach the gospel in Asia on his second missionary journey but the Spirit forbade him (Acts 16:6). However, later on the same journey he had the opportunity to preach in the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19). When his hearers asked him to stay in Ephesus longer, he replied that he could not, after first assuring them that he would return (Acts 18:18-19). However, Priscilla and Aquila, who had accompanied Paul on his journey from Corinth to Ephesus, remained in Ephesus while he returned to Caesarea and Syrian Antioch. During their stay in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila mentored Apollos, who eventually went on to minister in Corinth (Acts 18:24-28).

Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey. During his three-year stay in Ephesus (Acts 20:31) many amazing things happened. His first converts were twelve disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7). Paul preached in the synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8). However, after experiencing opposition (Acts 19:9) he withdrew from the synagogue and ministered at the school of Tyrannus for two years (Acts 19:10). This ministry proved effective (Acts 19:20; 1 Cor 16:19) and ultimately led to the birth of the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev 2-3). During Paul's stay in Ephesus, God authenticated his ministry through various signs (Acts 19:11-12). Paul's ministry eventually led to the conversion of numerous sorcerers (Acts 19:17-20). The effectiveness of Paul's ministry

ultimately hurt the trade of the local silversmiths who made their living through the sale and manufacture of statues to be used in the temple. Thus, Demetrius provoked a mob leading to the dragging of Gaius and Aristarchus before the Ephesians in the theater. Although Paul wanted to join his friends in the theater, his fellow believers restrained him. The town clerk eventually quieted the mob by explaining that their activity would invite an investigation by Rome and that the issue could be resolved through other legal channels. These events caused Paul to leave Ephesus for Macedonia (Acts 19:23-41).

Later, on his third missionary journey, Paul counseled the Ephesian elders on the Isle of Miletus. There he admonished them regarding their responsibility to teach and to protect the flock from false teachers (Acts 20:17-38). In sum, the church at Ephesus had been blessed by being ministered to by many from the apostolic generation, including Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Timothy, and John.³ The church was also blessed as the recipient of four canonical books, including Ephesians, 1-2 Timothy, and Revelation (Rev 2:1).

A problem as to the exact destination of the letter arises upon the realization that the phrase "at Ephesus" (1:1) is omitted in three of the best and oldest Alexandrian manuscripts. Furthermore, Marcion referred to the letter as "the letter to the Laodecians." These facts have caused many to conclude that the letter was an encyclical letter sent by Paul to the churches in Asia rather than a letter addressed to a single destination. Some have speculated that the letter to the Laodecians (Col 4:16) is actually what is now known as the letter to the Ephesians with the Laodecia inserted so that the Laodecians might read it. This theory is buttressed by the fact that the letter contains no personal greetings or terms of endearment. In addition, the letter contains no specific reference to a local church problem. Furthermore, by using the terminology "heard" (1:15; 3:2; 4:21), Paul was indicating no direct knowledge of the recipients. Such impersonality seems strange in light of the fact that Paul spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Although Paul was unknown in Asia (Col 2:1), he was certainly well known in Ephesus. The encyclical theory receives further support when it is understood that the doctrinal truths presented in the letter are universally applicable. Such universal doctrinal truths include the universal church, salvation, the Spirit's ministry, family and business relationships, spiritual warfare, and the admonition to mature.

Despite this theory's initial appeal, it is fraught with problems. First, no other Greek manuscripts include any names of other churches or cities in lieu of the phrase "at Ephesus." Second, the majority of the most widely distributed Greek manuscripts do contain the phrase. Third, the church fathers believed that the letter was sent to Ephesus. Fourth, the title "to the Ephesians" appears in all the manuscripts. Fifth, the lack of personal references may be due to other factors. Such factors may include the purity of the church, Paul's purpose in writing, Paul's desire to avoid favoritism, and the fact that Paul

wanted to keep the letter short. If Paul had sent personal greetings to everyone he knew in Ephesus, the letter would have expanded beyond a manageable size. Interestingly, the only letters that Paul attached personal greeting to were Colossians and Romans. These were letters to churches that Paul had never visited. Sixth, perhaps the universal applicability of the doctrine presented in Ephesians can be explained in terms of the fact that the letter was sent to Ephesus yet was written in such a way that its principles could be universally applied throughout Asia. Seventh, even if the letter is encyclical, it is likely that the letter gained its title because it went to Ephesus first and later returned to Ephesus since this was the predominant city in Asia. In sum, no interpretive issue within the book is affected if the interpreter holds to a specific destination or an encyclical purpose of Ephesians.

Place of Writing and Date

The letter was written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16-31) making it the first of Paul's four "prison epistles" (Eph, Phil, Col, Philemon). Four reasons make it likely that Paul wrote during this period. First, as in his other letters, Paul mentions his chains (3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil 1:12-13; Col 1:24; 4:3,10,18; Philemon 1,9-10,13,23). Second, 6:18-20 indicates that Paul had an opportunity to preach the gospel to others while in prison. This scenario harmonizes well with Paul's first Roman imprisonment where he was under house arrest and able to receive visitors (Acts 28:17,23,30). Third, as explained earlier, a great deal of overlap exists in between Ephesians and Colossians. Fourth, in both Ephesians and Colossians, Paul commends Tychicus as the bearer of the epistle (6:21; Col 4:7-9). Thus, Ephesians must be dated during the time of Paul's first Roman imprisonment if Colossians is similarly dated during this era. Interestingly, Colossians also mentions Onesimus (Col 4:7-9), a character that figures prominently in Philemon. Thus, Ephesians must also be dated during Paul's imprisonment if Philemon is dated during this period.

Others have proposed inadequate alternatives for the place of writing. Some contend that the letter was written during Paul's two-year Caesarean imprisonment (Acts 24:27). However, this locale is unlikely given the fact that Paul's companions were never assembled in Caesarea, the letter neglects to mention the Caesarean known as Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8), and the Caesarean imprisonment offered no hope of imminent release (Phil 1:19-21,25,27; 2:24; Philemon 22). Others have proposed Ephesus as the place of writing (2 Cor 11:23; Rom 16:7). This theory's attractiveness involves the ease at which Paul could have communicated to the Ephesian church. However there is no record that Paul was imprisoned in Ephesus. A final option is that the letter was written from Paul's second Roman imprisonment. This theory is strengthened through the mention of Tychicus in both Ephesians (6:21) and 2 Timothy (2 Tim 4:12). However, the similarity of content between Ephesians and Colossians argues against this theory.

The most reasonable scenario is as follows. Tychicus was about to take Onesimus back to Philemon at Colossae. Consequently, Paul entrusted the letter to Tychicus to deliver to

Ephesus. This would be a reasonable request since only 100 miles existed in between Colossae and Ephesus. In fact, Tychicus carried Paul's three other "prison epistles" as well. We know that Tychicus eventually rejoined Paul during his second Roman imprisonment because 2 Tim 4:12 indicates that he sent Tychicus back to Ephesus. If Paul's first Roman imprisonment is accepted as the place of writing, then a date of 60 AD is appropriate. Ephesians was most likely written before the other prison letters since it makes no mention of an imminent release as the others do (Phil 1:19-21,25,27; 2:24; Philemon 22).

Purpose

Paul seems to have had multiple reasons for writing the letter. First, although the letter was not written to correct a specific problem in the church, it was written to prevent future problems by encouraging believers to walk in the spiritual wealth they presently possess. Thus, Paul makes the Ephesians aware of their position (1-3) so that they can draw upon these resources in their daily practice (4-6). Second, Paul wanted his readers to understand that the true source of their spiritual power was their relationship with Christ rather than the pagan magic that was so prevalent in Ephesus. Third, Paul wanted to promote unity within the church. Paul does this by reminding his readers of their corporate identity (2:11-3:13) and reminding them to live in harmony with this identity (4:1-16). Fourth, Paul wrote to admonish his readers to love. One sixth of Paul's references to love appear in this letter. The book begins (1:4,6) and ends (6:23-24) with an emphasis upon love. Paul would later remind the Ephesians that love is the goal of their instruction (1 Tim 1:5). Such advice was necessary for the Ephesians who would eventually leave their first love (Rev 2:4).

Structure and Message

In the first section of the book (Eph 1-3), Paul explains the spiritual wealth of the believer. This section contains no imperatives. Paul simply unfolds what the believer already possesses because of his relationship to Christ. However, in the second section (Eph 4-6), Paul explains how the believer is responsible to conduct himself in light of the riches that he has received. Consequently, 35 imperatives are found in this section. Thus, while the first section focuses upon knowledge, belief, position, and privileges, the second section focuses upon wisdom, behavior, practice, and responsibility. Thus, the message of Ephesians is that believers are responsible to walk according to their heavenly calling.

Unique Characteristics

The letter boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, it contributes to ecclesiology. Nowhere is the universal nature of the church better presented than in Ephesians. The letter explains the mystery nature of the church and the fact that it is comprised of both Jew and Gentile as joint heirs. Ephesians and Colossians taken together explain the relationship of the head (Christ) to the body (the church). While Colossians focuses upon the head, Ephesians focuses upon the body. Second, the letter contributes to pneumatology

by explaining the multiple ministries that the Spirit accomplishes on the believer's behalf. Third, the letter contributes to Christology by explaining the believer's relationship to Christ. This is evidenced though the repetition of the phrase "in Christ" found throughout the letter. This phrase or its equivalent appears roughly 35x in the letter, which is more than any other New Testament book. Fourth, besides Romans, the letter represents Paul's most carefully written theological letter. Fifth, the letter explains the heavenly nature of the believer's calling. Sixth, the book employs numerous literary devices that are not as prevalent in Paul's other letters. They include the uniting of 1:3-14 into a single Greek sentence, the consistent use of the light/darkness motif (5:8), and the spiritual warfare chapter (6:10-20). Other miscellaneous characteristics include the way the book connects worship and theology and trends toward formality. The book contains no personal greetings. In Ephesians, Paul only communicates two personal facts about himself (his imprisonment and his reason for sending Tychicus).

Outline

I. Wealth of the believer (Eph 1:1—3:21)

(1) Greeting (1:1-2)

(A) Sender (1:1a)

(B) Recipients (1:1b)

(C) Salutation: grace and peace (1:2)

(2) Riches (1:3-14)

(A) Riches enumerated (1:3-14)

(a) Chosen by the Father (1:3-6)

(i) Blessing (1:3-5)

(a) Every spiritual blessing (1:3)

(b) Chose believing sinner to be holy (1:4)

(c) Predestined to adoption through Christ (1:5)

(ii) Doxology to the Father (1:6)

(b) Redeemed by the Son (1:7-12)

(i) Blessings (1:7-11)

(a) Redemption through his blood (1:7a)

(b) Forgiveness of sins (1:7b)

(c) Revelation of redemptive program (1:8-10)

(d) Inheritance (1:11)

(ii) Doxology to the Son (1:12)

(c) Sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)

(i) Blessings (1:13-14a)

(a) Sealed (1:13)

(b) Pledge (1:14a)

- (ii) Doxology to the Holy Spirit (1:14b)
- (3) Prayer for comprehension riches (1:15-23)
 - (A) Commendation (1:15-16a)
 - (B) Supplication (1:16b-23)
 - (a) General request for revelation (1:16b-18a)
 - (b) Specific request for revelation (1:18b-23)
 - (i) Hope of the divine calling (1:18b)
 - (ii) Riches of His glorious inheritance (1:18c)
 - (iii) Greatness of God's power which raised and ascended Christ (1:19-23)
 - (a) Magnitude (1:19)
 - (b) Manifestation (1:20-23)
 - (1) Displayed Christ (1:20-21)
 - a. Raising Christ (1:20a)
 - b. Seating Christ in heaven (1:20b-21)
 - (2) Everything subjected to Christ (1:22a)
 - (3) Christ as head of church (1:22b-23)
- (4) Position (Eph 2:1—3:13)
 - (A) Individual (2:1-10)
 - (a) Old (2:1-3)
 - (i) Dead (2:1)
 - (ii) Demonically influenced (2:2)
 - (iii) Depraved (2:3a)
 - (iv) Doomed (2:3b)
 - (b) New (2:4-10)
 - (i) Spiritual life (2:4-5)
 - (ii) Heavenly position (2:6-7)
 - (iii) Saved by grace (2:8-9)
 - (iv) Created for good works (2:10)
 - (B) Corporate (2:11-3:13)
 - (a) Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (2:11-22)
 - (i) Statement of union (2:11-13)
 - (a) Past disunion (2:11-12)
 - (1) Non-circumcision (2:11)
 - (2) Separate from Christ (2:12a)
 - (3) Excluded from Israel (2:12b)
 - (4) Strangers to covenants (2:12c)
 - (5) Without hope (2:12d)

- (6) Without God (2:12e)
 - (b) Present union (2:13)
- (ii) Explanation of union (2:14-18)
 - (a) Assertion of peace (2:14a)
 - (b) Destruction of wall (2:14b-15a)
 - (c) Made the two one (2:15b-18)
 - (1) Peace (2:15b)
 - (2) One body (2:16)
 - (3) Old Testament analogy (2:17)
 - (4) One access (2:18)
- (iii) Description of the new building (2:19-22)
 - (a) God's household (2:19)
 - (b) Foundation (2:20)
 - (c) Formation (2:21)
 - (d) Function (2:22)
- (b) Revelation of the mystery of the church (3:1-13)
 - (i) Introduction (3:1)
 - (ii) The mystery (3:2-6)
 - (a) Administration of God's grace (3:2)
 - (b) Revelation of the mystery (3:3-6)
 - (1) Its disclosure by revelation (3:3)
 - (2) Its comprehensibility (3:4)
 - (3) Its timing (3:5)
 - (4) Its content (3:6)
 - (iii) Paul's ministry (3:7-12)
 - (a) Paul's placement into the ministry (3:7-8a)
 - (b) Paul's performance in the ministry (3:8b-9)
 - (1) To preach the riches of Christ (3:8b)
 - (2) To enlighten the mystery (3:9)
 - (c) Content of Paul's ministry (3:10-12)
 - (1) God's wisdom (3:10)
 - (2) God's purpose (3:11)
 - (3) Our access (3:12)
 - (iv) Concluding exhortation (3:13)
- (c) Prayer for comprehension (3:14-21)
 - (i) Paul's humility in prayer (3:14-15)
 - (ii) Content of the prayer (3:16-19)
 - (a) Strengthening the inner man (3:16)

(b) Christ would be at home in their hearts (3:17a)

(c) Comprehension of God's love (3:17b-19)

(iii) Ascription of praise (3:20-21)

II. Walk of the believer (Eph 4:1—6:24)

(A) Walk of unity (4:1-16)

(A) Exhortation to unity (4:1-3)

(a) Exhortation to walk worthy (4:1)

(b) Character traits creating unity (4:2)

(c) Exhortation to unity (4:3)

(B) Explanation of unity: Common doctrine (4:4-6)

(a) One body (4:4a)

(b) One Spirit (4:4b)

(c) One Lord (4:5a)

(d) One faith (4:5b)

(e) One baptism (4:5c)

(f) One God (4:6a)

(g) One Father (4:6b)

(C) The reason for unity: gifts (4:7-12)

(a) Reality of giftedness (4:7)

(b) Reason for gifts (4:8-10)

(c) Enumeration of gifts (4:11)

(d) Purpose of gifts (4:12-16)

(2) Walk of holiness (4:17-32)

(A) Do not imitate the pagan (4:17-21)

(a) Exhortation not to imitate the pagan (4:17a)

(b) Description of the pagan (4:17b-19)

(c) Exhortation to follow the teaching of Christ (4:20-21)

(B) Put off the old man and put on the new (4:22-24)

(C) Contrasts explaining how to put off the old man and embrace the new (4:25-32)

(a) Truth rather than lies (4:25)

(b) Righteous anger rather than sin (4:26-27)

(c) Work rather than stealing (4:28a)

(d) Giving rather than stealing (4:28b)

(e) Edifying speech rather than corrupt communication (4:29-30)

(f) Forgiveness instead of bitterness (4:31-32)

(3) Walk of love (5:1-6)

(A) Positive (5:1-2)

- (a) Imitate God (5:1)
 - (b) Walk in love (5:2)
 - (i) Command to love (5:2a)
 - (ii) Example of Christ (5:2b)
- (B) Negative: abstain from evil (5:3-6)
 - (a) Responsibility (5:3-4)
 - (i) In conduct (5:3)
 - (ii) In conversation (5:4)
 - (b) Reason (5:5-6)
 - (i) Evildoers have no inheritance (5:5)
 - (ii) Evildoers will experience God's wrath (5:6)
- (4) Walk in the light (5:7-14)
 - (A) Do not become involved with evildoers (5:7-10)
 - (a) Command: do not get involved with evildoers (5:7)
 - (b) Reason: believers are changed people (5:8a)
 - (c) Command: walk as children of light (5:8b-10)
 - (i) Walk as children of light (5:8b)
 - (ii) Fruit of the light (5:9)
 - (iii) Please the Lord (5:10)
 - (B) Do not become involved with evil works (5:11-13)
 - (a) Command: do not participate but expose (5:11)
 - (b) Reason: shame of evil works (5:12)
 - (c) Explanation: light exposes the darkness (5:13)
 - (C) Conclusion: Enlightenment of Christ (5:14)
- (5) Walk of wisdom (5:15-17)
 - (A) Walk circumspectly (5:15)
 - (B) Use time wisely (5:16)
 - (C) Understand God's will (5:17)
- (6) Walk of the spirit (5:18—6:9)
 - (A) Command to be filled with the Spirit (5:18)
 - (B) Evidence of the Spirit's control (5:19—6:9)
 - (a) Speaking (5:19a)
 - (b) Singing (5:19b)
 - (c) Thanksgiving (5:20)
 - (d) Submission (5:21—6:9)
 - (i) Command of submission (5:21)
 - (ii) Practicality of submission (5:22—6:9)
 - (a) Husbands and wives (5:22-33)

- (1) Wife's submission (5:22-24)
 - a. Imperative: wives submit (5:22)
 - b. Reason: husband is to lead (5:23)
 - c. Illustration: Christ and the church (5:24a)
 - d. Application: follow church's example (5:24b)
- (2) Husband's duty to love wife (5:25-32)
 - a. Imperative: husband love wife (5:25a)
 - b. Illustration: Christ's love for the church (5:25b-27)
 - c. Explanation (5:28-32)
 - i. Love wife as own body (5:28-29a)
 - ii. Christ cares for his body (5:29b-30)
 - iii. The two are one flesh (5:31)
 - iv. Mystery (5:32)
- (3) Summation of responsibilities (5:33)
- (b) Parents and children (6:1-4)
 - (1) Children's submission (6:1-3)
 - a. Imperative (6:1)
 - b. Old Testament support (6:2-3)
 - i. Commandment (6:2a)
 - ii. Promise (6:2b-3)
 - (2) Parent's duty (6:4)
 - a. Negative: do not provoke to wrath (6:4a)
 - b. Positive: rear them in knowledge of God (6:4b)
- (c) Slaves and masters (6:5-9)
 - (1) Duty of slaves (6:5-8)
 - a. Imperative: obey masters (6:5-7)
 - b. Reason: God rewards (6:8)
 - (2) Duty of masters (6:9)
 - a. Imperative: do not threaten (6:9a)
 - b. Reason: God judges (6:9b)
- (7) Walk of warfare (6:10-20)
 - (A) Be strong in the Lord (6:10)
 - (B) Put on God's armor (6:11a)
 - (C) Purpose: to stand against Satan (6:11b-12)
 - (D) Reiteration: put on God's armor (6:13)
 - (E) Weaponry enumerated (6:14-20)
 - (a) Belt of truth (6:14a)
 - (b) Breastplate of righteousness (6:14b)

- (c) Sandals of peace (6:15)
 - (d) Shield of faith (6:16)
 - (e) Helmet of salvation (6:17a)
 - (f) Sword of the Spirit (6:17b)
 - (g) Prayer (6:18-20)
 - (i) Petition (6:18)
 - (ii) Intercession for Paul (6:19-20)
 - (a) Utterance (6:19a)
 - (b) Boldness (6:19b-20)
 - (8) Conclusion (6:21-24)
 - (A) Tychicus as the letter's bearer (6:21-22)
 - (B) Salutation (6:23)
 - (C) Benediction (6:24)
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Author

Paul wrote Ephesians along with Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians, the other "Prison Epistles" during his first Roman imprisonment, 60-62 AD (3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Cf. Acts 28:16-31). During that time Paul was under house arrest. He lived in his own rented quarters, under guard by Roman soldiers. He was allowed visitors and could minister, without hindrance, as far as his confinement permitted (Acts 28:16,30-31).

Paul knew Ephesus and the church very well. He had ministered in Asia Minor, the Roman province of which Ephesus was the capital, with Ephesus as his headquarters, for about three years: 53-56 AD (Acts 19:1—20:1). It appears that he sent this epistle to the Ephesian church, so that the Christians there would subsequently circulate it among the other churches. At least three other NT books went first to Ephesus: 1 & 2 Timothy and Revelation (Cf. Rev 2:1). John's Gospel and his three epistles probably did as well. Tychicus evidently delivered this epistle to the Ephesian church (Eph. 6:21-22).

Paul's Visits to Ephesus

1st Visit: Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey (51 AD)

- On his way from Greece to Syria, Paul visits Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21)
- Brings Aquila and Priscilla and leaves them there
- Paul is pressed to stay; departs with a promise to return (en route to keep festival in Jerusalem; Pentecost?)
- During his absence, Apollo visits, received full instruction from Aquila and Priscilla, and continued on to Corinth

2nd Visit (54-57 AD)

- Ephesus emerged as the headquarter church in Proconsular Asia (Acts 19:20-31)
- There were 14 key churches: the seven of Revelation, plus Troas, Assos, Adramyttium, Miletus, Trogyllium, Hierapolis, and Colossae
- 1 Corinthians was written here
- The period closed with the tumult raised by Demetrius (Acts 19:19-41)

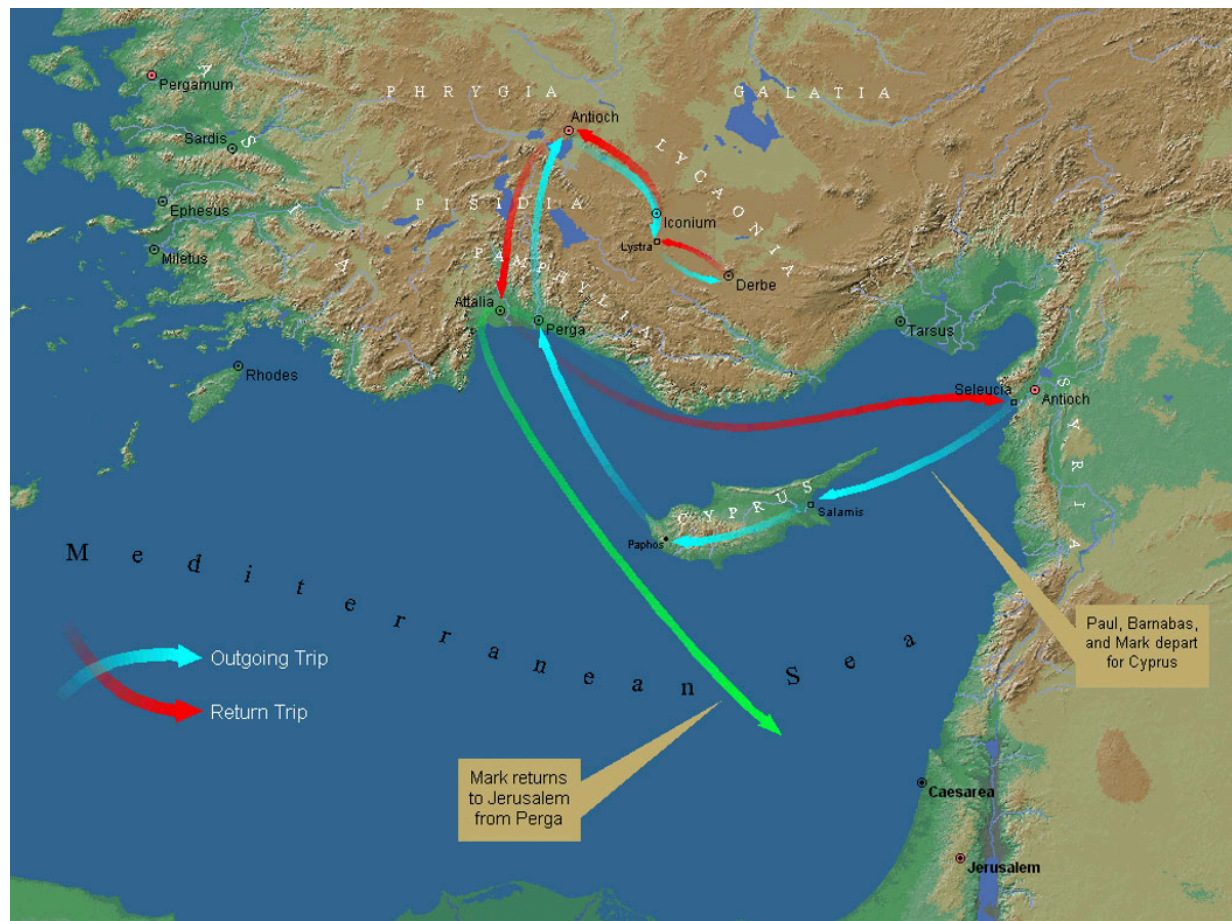
3rd Visit: Paul's last voyage to Syria (58 AD)

- Paul lands at Miletus, 30 miles S of Ephesus, to meet the leaders away from the crowd and presents the pathetic and noble charge (Acts 20:16-38)

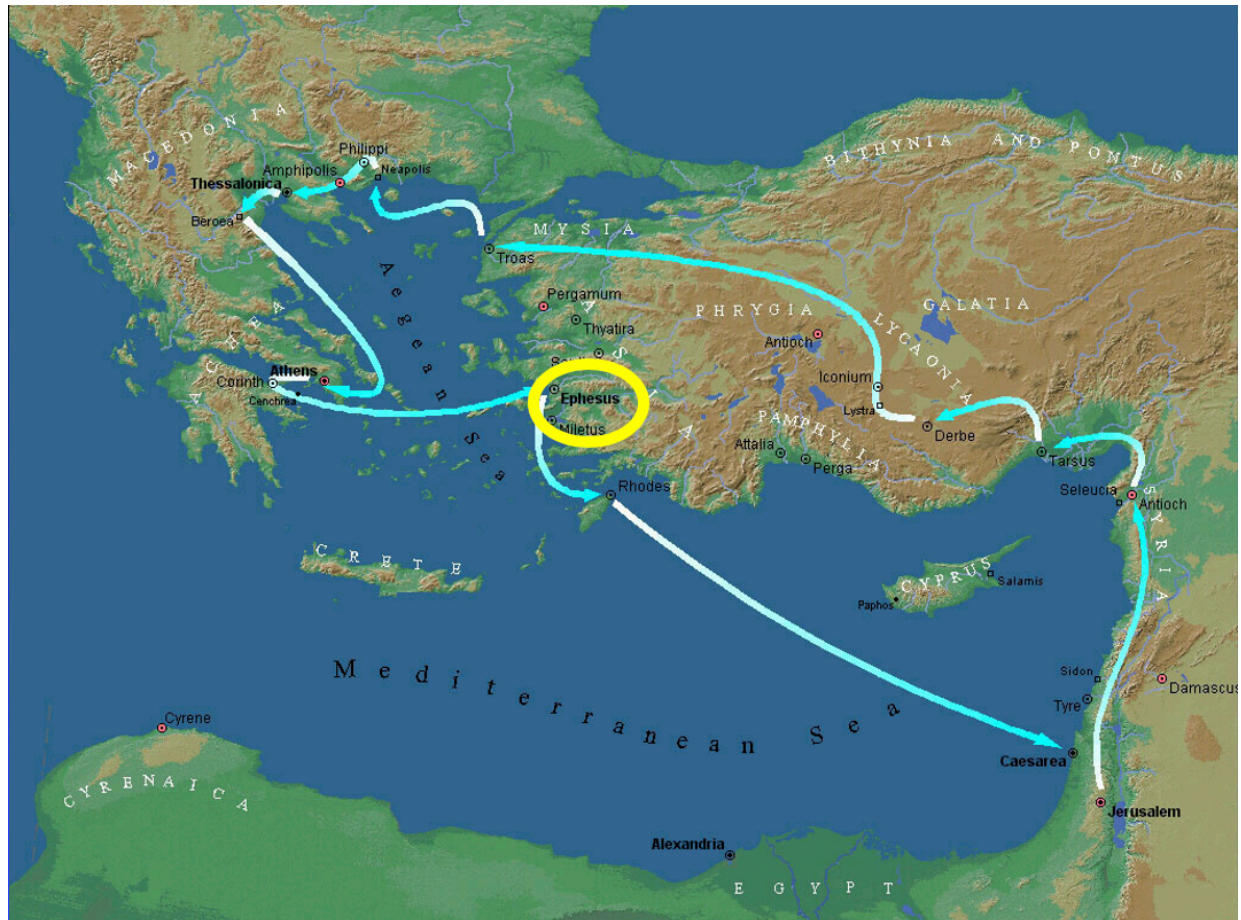
Audience

- The church at Ephesus (1:1)
- Believers (1:3) - his audience was already saved

Ephesus was a city in Asia Minor. The Gospel came to Ephesus during Paul's 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys. In his 1st missionary journey, Paul went through Cyprus then to southern Asia Minor.



In his 2nd journey, Paul again departed from Antioch and wanted to go into Asia, but the Holy Spirit told him he couldn't go. So Paul went to Macedonia, to Greece (Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth), then made his way across the Aegean Sea for his first visit to Ephesus. There he went into the synagogue and briefly spoke of Christ. Upon hearing him, the people wanted Paul to stay longer and continue speaking, but Paul declined and moved on after his short two-day stay.



On his 3rd missionary journey, we learn why the Holy Spirit would not allow Paul to go into Asia on his 2nd missionary journey. He begins in Antioch, goes through Galatia, then sets up shop for three years in Ephesus. The background for the book of Ephesians is Paul's three year stay there.

He setup shop in the School of Tyrannus (a lecture hall), and spent three years lecturing about the things of God. The background for Ephesus is Acts 18:23—19:41.



Ephesus Background (Acts 18:23–19:41)

- City of 500k people
 - Paul always gravitated to the population center
 - Ephesus became the de facto headquarters of the church during Paul's three-year stay
 - Acts 19:9-10 speaks about all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord; this is how the church at Ephesus and many other churches in the area were started
- Temple of Diana (Acts 19:35)
 - Ephesus was a pagan center; the pagans believed that the Temple of Diana fell to earth out of heaven
 - You could go into this temple and have sexual relations with a prostitute, and call it "religion"
 - This is why Paul has much to say in Ephesians about the marital relationship and sexual immorality
- Fascination with pagan sorcery (Acts 19:11-16, 19, 24-25)
 - Ephesus was a city given over to witchcraft and occultism; the Ephesians were fascinated by spiritual power, not necessarily from God

- Paul had so many converts from paganism to Christianity during his stay there that they began to burn their occultic books (Acts 19:19). The value of the burned books was 50,000 pieces of silver.
- There was an idol manufacturer who "made a vast living" making idols for pagan worship; Paul became an enemy of his because so many pagans were turning to Christ that it was cutting into this idol manufacturer's living
- Home of zealous Jews (Acts 19:8-10)
 - Ephesus was home to many Jews, some of whom came to Christ. When they came to Christ, they were so zealous for Judaism that they wanted to bring their Judaism to the Christian experience. The Gentiles saw this happening and they weren't interested.
 - Paul saw this happening, saw there was a split in the church between zealous Jews and Gentile believers, which is why he speaks so much in Ephesians about the unity of the Body of Christ.

Location of Writing

- Rome - on Paul's "4th missionary journey"
 - Paul wanted to get the Gospel to Rome, so he used his vast knowledge of Jewish and Roman law to appeal to Caesar and get a trial in Rome
- 1st Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16-31)
 - Many references to Paul's imprisonment (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20)
 - Paul didn't write Ephesians from a place of comfort or leisure, but from a Roman prison
- 1st prison letter
 - Prison epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians
 - Paul wrote 13 epistles, Ephesians was his 7th work
- 60 AD



Why is it important to know where and when Paul wrote Ephesians? Because Paul talks a lot about wealth, at a time when he had no wealth. He talks about power in a time when he had no power. He talks about position, during a time in his life when he had no position in life, humanly speaking.

Paul's point in Ephesians is that believers have a source of wealth, power, and position that our circumstances can never take away. We can enjoy the things that God has bestowed upon us as His children during times of prosperity and during times of difficulty, when you have a job and when you lose your job. When your 401k is doing well, or when it becomes a 201k. In these times, we can still enjoy our spiritual wealth that God has given every believer.

Jesus in His letter to the church at Smyrna, not too far from Ephesus, told them (Rev 2:9): **"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)...."** This in essence is about what the book of Ephesians is about. Paul says that as I am writing this to you from prison, I am in difficulty, but I am rich.

Purpose

- Wealth determines walk — position determines practice
 - Paul (and the Holy Spirit's) purpose in writing Ephesians is to get believers to understand and comprehend the lavish wealth that God has given to believers in Jesus Christ

- Paul understands human nature in that if we perceive ourselves differently, we will act differently
- Preventive maintenance
 - Paul is not necessarily correcting the Ephesians to whom he is writing...there was no major heresy, doctrinal defection, or major sin present in this church.
 - Part of the reason for this is that Paul had given them a tremendous spiritual inheritance, not only birthing the church, but raising it to maturity.
 - Paul stopped by Miletus at the conclusion of his 3rd missionary journey to meet with the elders at Ephesus
 - Paul later sent Timothy to be the pastor in Ephesus and penned two epistles to Timothy during his pastorship there (1 Timothy & 2 Timothy)
 - The Apostle John sometime between 85-95 AD set up shop in Ephesus and acted as a Bishop from Ephesus over the church in Asia Minor
 - Priscilla and Aquilla, as well as Apollos (mighty in the Scriptures) ministered in Ephesus
 - 35 years after Paul wrote Ephesians, things weren't quite the same. Jesus spoke to this church in Rev 2:4-5

They had a tremendous beginning, but the ending was tragic: they fell out of love with the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Lord removed their lampstand (their witness and influence in the community where they ministered).

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul knew what would happen to the church at Ephesus in the future...that they would fall out of love with Jesus Christ. So Paul begins his "preventive maintenance" in Ephesians by talking about love.

Theme/Message

- The message of Ephesians: To help the believer understand the vastness of their spiritual wealth (individually and corporately) and then once they understand that, to help them to live in accordance with it
 - We have each been blessed individually, but we have also been blessed corporately as a church, as the body of Christ

Unique Characteristics

<u>Eph 1-3</u>	<u>Eph 4-6</u>
Relationship	Responsibility
No imperatives	38 imperatives
Orthodoxy (correct belief)	Orthopraxy (correct practice)
Knowledge	Wisdom (the application of knowledge)
Belief	Behavior

Position
Privileges

Practice
Responsibility

The story of the Bible is not what we do for God, but what God has done for man. Thus, the Holy Spirit attempts to inform us about what God has given to us and done for us, with the understanding that if man can grasp what God has done for us, we will live and behave differently.

Once we understand what God has done for us, how can we not want to serve Him with a joyful heart?

Ephesians 4:1

Therefore...

1-3



4-6