

## LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS OVERVIEW

### Topics:

Authorship, Date Written, Setting/Historical Context, Audience/Addressees, Occasion and Purpose for Writing, the Message, Main Themes

### Open It Questions

1. What builds a friendship?

---

---

---

2. What words would you use to describe what makes a friendship last?

---

---

---

### Introduction

As you read Ephesians, see this book as more than an important, theological document for an ancient church. It is the Holy Spirit-inspired letter to followers of Christ with whom Paul had lived and worked for three years. He was committed to them and to the churches in that area. This is a letter bathed in love.

### Background and Historical Context

#### Author

3. Who is the author of Ephesians? (1:1 and 3:1)

---

---

---

**Date Written**

- 4. Approximately when was Ephesians written? See the handout entitled “*A Chronology of Paul’s Writings.*”

---

---

---

**The Setting**

See handout – “*Ephesians Background and Historical Context*”

***The City of Ephesus***

- 5. What are some key aspects of the City of Ephesus and the surrounding area?

---

---

---

---

---

---

***The Church in Ephesus***

- 6. In what two places did Paul minister while in Ephesus? (Acts 19:8-11)

---

---

---

- 7. What other spiritual leaders preached and taught in the church at Ephesus? (Acts 18:24-28; Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 1:3)

---

---

---

8. What did God have to say about the church at Ephesus? (Revelations 2:2-5)

---

---

---

**Audience/Addressees**

9. To whom was this letter addressed? (Ephesians 1:1)

---

---

---

**Occasion and Purpose for Writing**

10. Why was this letter written? (Ephesians 1:1)

---

---

---

**Message**

11. What message or messages did the author of the letter intend to convey.

---

---

---

**Main Themes and Importance for Today**

12. What are the main themes in the letter to the Ephesians?

- *God's Purpose* (Ephesians 1:3-24, 18-23; 2:6-10)

---

---

---

- *Christ the Center* (Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:19-22; 3:10-11, 20-21; 4:7-16)

---

---

---

- *The Living Church* (Ephesians 1:2-23; 2:1-22; 4:4-6, 11-16)

---

---

---

- *The New Family* (Ephesians 1:55; 2:11-19; 3:1-6; 4:1-6; 5:21-33)

---

---

---

- *Christian Conduct* (Ephesians 2:1-10; 3:14-19; 4:1-3, 17-32; 5:1-33; 6:1-18)

---

---

---

Life Application New Testament Commentary.

## **SETTING**

### **The City of Ephesus**

Outside of Rome, Ephesus was the most important city that Paul visited. Located at the intersection of two ancient, and the western route to Colosse, Laodicea, and beyond) at the western edge of Asia Minor (now Turkey), with easy access to the Aegean Sea, Ephesus had become a political, commercial, and religious center. It had been one of the main routes either by sea or by land from Rome to the east. Ephesus had a harbor on the Cayster River, which emptied into the Aegean Sea, so the city, at one time, was known as “the Landing Place,” and the citizens were proud of its role as a port city and a gateway to Asia. By the first century, however, the harbor was nearly filled with silt, thus causing some economic decline.

A strong source of income for Ephesus was the great temple of Artemis (Diana), the fertility goddess. Four times larger than the Parthenon, this shrine, considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was revered throughout Asia and the world (Acts 19:27). The temple stood outside the city walls and faced east. Built completely of marble, it was 324 feet long and 164 feet wide and took 220 years to erect. The image of the goddess stood, surrounded by curtains, in the center of the temple.

In addition to the temple, Ephesus had an immense amphitheater (see Acts 19:27-29) that could seat more than twenty-five thousand spectators. The city was positioned between two mountainous ridges. The eastern ridge formed the foundation for this theater, as it had been cut out of the mountainside. Nearby stood the stadium, or racecourse, where fights between wild animals or between men and animals were held. A great marble street, the main street of Ephesus, ran northwest from the theater to the harbor. The street was flanked on both sides by an elaborate colonnade.

The city’s commercial life and prosperity came to depend on the many thousands of tourists and worshipers visiting the temple, theater, and stadium annually. No wonder the populace became alarmed, and then enraged, when told that Paul’s teachings would undermine the worship of Artemis and thus endanger their livelihood and the city’s economy (Acts 19:23-41).

## **The Church in Ephesus**

As was his custom, Paul began his ministry in Ephesus among Jews, in the synagogue (Acts 19:8). When the Jewish leaders refused to listen, Paul left and taught in a rented lecture hall (Acts 19:9-10). During the next two years, many Jews and Greeks came to hear the gospel and believed (Acts 19:11, 17). At the writing of this letter, the church consisted mostly of Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-19; 3:1).

## **OCCASION AND PURPOSE FOR WRITING**

Paul felt keenly responsible for the spiritual health of the churches that he had planted. His deep concern led him to revisit many of those churches on subsequent travels, and it certainly motivated him to write letters and to send other teachers and leaders after him. In Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders, he urged them to be on guard for false teachers ([Acts 20:28-31](#)). Paul knew that young believers, like little lambs, would be easy prey for false teachers and egotistical preachers who could devastate the flock. So Paul wrote to strengthen and mature his Christian brothers and sisters in their faith by explaining the purpose and power of the church—helping them see the big picture—and by calling believers to sound doctrine and holy living.

## **THE MESSAGE**

- ***Doctrinal Foundations*** (Ephesians chapters 1-3)  
After a warm greeting ([1:1-2](#)), Paul affirms the nature of the church—the glorious fact that believers in Christ have been showered with God's kindness ([1:3-8](#)), chosen for greatness ([1:9-12](#)), marked with the Holy Spirit ([1:13, 14](#)), filled with the Spirit's power ([1:15-23](#)), freed from sin's curse and bondage ([2:1-10](#)), and brought near to God ([2:11-18](#)). As part of God's "house," we stand with the prophets, apostles, Jews, Gentiles, and Christ himself ([2:19–3:13](#)). Then, as though overcome with emotion by remembering all that God has done, Paul challenges the Ephesians to live close to Christ, and he breaks into spontaneous praise ([3:14-21](#)).

- ***Life Application*** (Ephesians chapters 4-6)

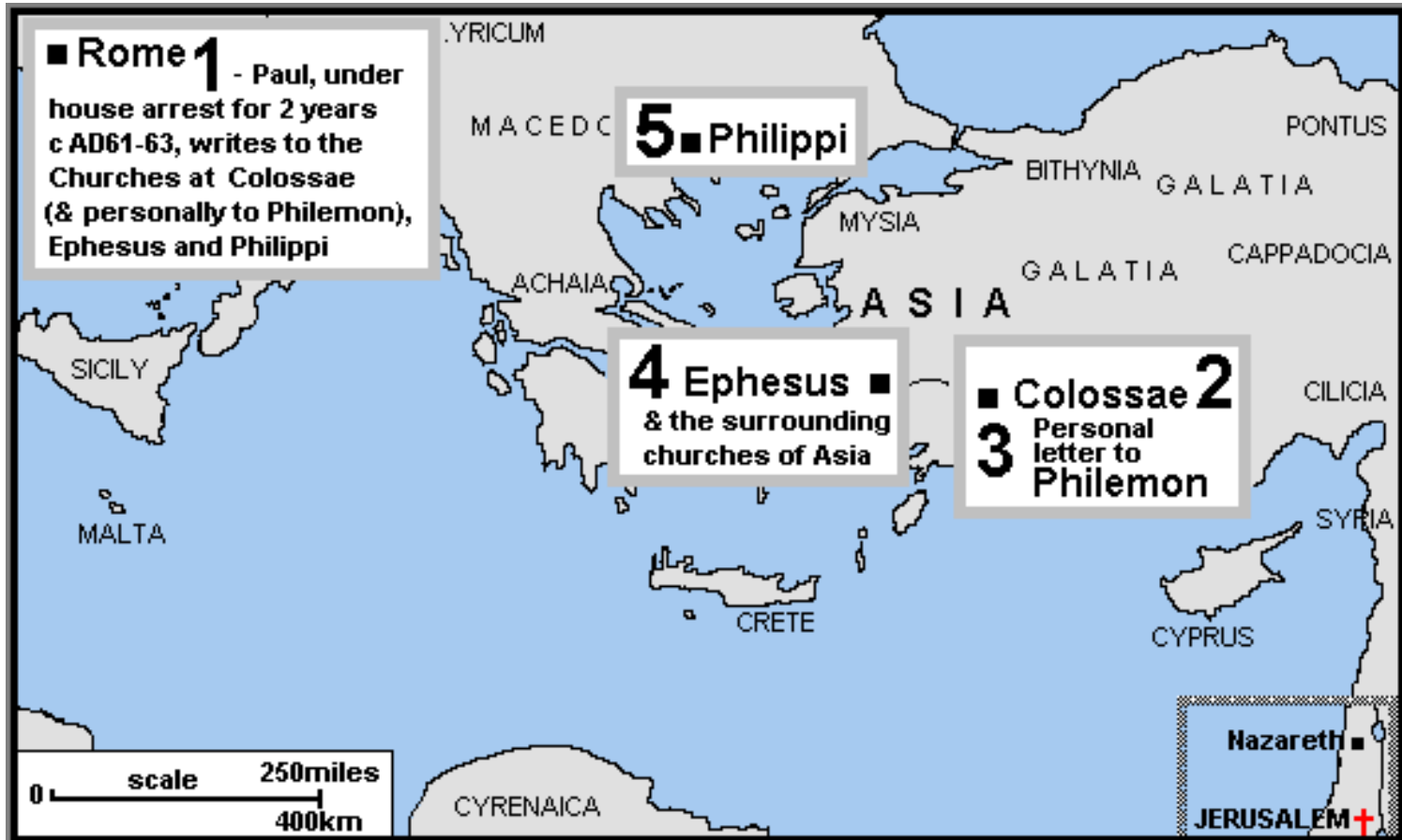
Paul then turns his attention to the implications of being in the body of Christ, the church. Believers should have unity in their commitment to Christ and their use of spiritual gifts (4:1-16). They should have the highest moral standards (4:17-6:9). For the individual, this means rejecting pagan practices (4:17-5:20), and for the family, this means mutual submission and love (5:21-6:9).

Paul then reminds them that the church is in a constant battle with the forces of darkness and that they should use every spiritual weapon at their disposal (6:10-17). He concludes by asking for their prayers, commissioning Tychicus, and giving a benediction (6:18-24).

**MAIN THEMES AND IMPORTANCE FOR TODAY**

- *God's Purpose* (Ephesians 1:3-24, 18-23; 2:6-10)
- *Christ the Center* (Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:19-22; 3:10-11, 20-21; 4:7-16)
- *The Living Church* (Ephesians 1:2-23; 2:1-22; 4:4-6, 11-16)
- *The New Family* (Ephesians 1:55; 2:11-19; 3:1-6; 4:1-6; 5:21-33)
- *Christian Conduct* (Ephesians 2:1-10; 3:14-19; 4:1-3, 17-32; 5:1-33; 6:1-18)

# MAP OF EPHESUS



[Source: <https://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CPn10Ephesians.htm> accessed 5/21/2020]



# A Chronology of Paul's Writings

## 1st Missionary Journey (45 - 47 A.D.)

No books were written

## 2nd Missionary Journey (51 - 54 A.D.)

- |    |                 |                |                      |
|----|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. | 1 Thessalonians | (52 - 53 A.D.) | Written from Corinth |
| 2. | 2 Thessalonians | (52 - 53 A.D.) | Written from Corinth |

## 3rd Missionary Journey (54 - 58 A.D.)

- |    |               |                   |                        |
|----|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 3. | 1 Corinthians | (Spring, 57 A.D.) | Written from Ephesus   |
| 4. | 2 Corinthians | (Autumn, 57 A.D.) | Written from Macedonia |
| 5. | Galatians     | (Winter, 57 A.D.) | Written from Greece    |
| 6. | Romans        | (Spring 58, A.D.) | Written from Corinth   |

## First Roman Imprisonment (61 - 63 A.D.)

- |     |             |                 |                   |
|-----|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 7.  | Philemon    | (61 or 62 A.D.) | Written from Rome |
| 8.  | Colossians  | (61 or 62 A.D.) | Written from Rome |
| 9.  | Ephesians   | (61 or 62 A.D.) | Written from Rome |
| 10. | Philippians | (61 or 62 A.D.) | Written from Rome |

## Between First & Second Imprisonments (63 - 67 A.D.)

- |     |           |           |                        |
|-----|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| 11. | 1 Timothy | (67 A.D.) | Written from Macedonia |
| 12. | Titus     | (67 A.D.) | Written from Ephesus   |

## Second Roman Imprisonment (68 A.D.)

- |     |           |           |                   |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 13. | 2 Timothy | (68 A.D.) | Written from Rome |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-------------------|

NOTE { It is believed by many that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. If in fact he did, that would bring to 14 the total number of books of the New Testament written by this great soldier of the cross.



*"I Paul have written it with mine own hand"*

Philemon 19



Barnes' Bible Charts

[Source: <http://www.biblecharts.org/newtestament/achronologyofpaulswritings.pdf>] [ Donnie S. Barnes, Th. D.]

# Ephesians Outline

**PAUL'S THEME:** Know who you are before God in Christ and live according to that identity.

**A. DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS:** Know who you are before God in Christ. (1:1-3:21)

1. Paul greets the saints. (1:1-2)
2. Paul praises God for His preplanned spiritual blessings. (1:3-14)
3. Paul prays that we would understand these blessings. (1:15-23)
4. Paul teaches the individual's new position because of God's blessings. (2:1-10)
5. Paul teaches the group's new position because of God's blessings. (2:11-22)
6. Paul explains his own mission: to proclaim God's blessings. (3:1-13)
7. Paul prays that we would know God's blessings in our deepest being. (3:14-21)

**B. LIFE APPLICATION:** Live Christ-centered lives because of your new identity (4:1-6:24)

1. Paul urges unity based on the common foundation. (4:1-16)
2. Paul urges holiness based on the common foundation. (4:17-32)
3. Paul urges a walk in love, light, and wisdom based on the common foundation. (5:1-21)
4. Paul urges submission based on the common foundation – husbands and wives. (5:22-33)
5. Paul urges submission based on the common foundation – children and parents. (6:1-4)
6. Paul urges submission based on the common foundation – slaves and masters. (6:5-9)
7. Paul urges steadfast warfare against spiritual forces based on the common foundation. (6:10-20)
8. Paul's benediction. (6:21-24)

[Source: LESSONmaker Outlines]

For we are his  
**WORKMANSHIP**  
created in  
**CHRIST JESUS**  
for EPH 2:10  
*Good* works  
which  
**GOD PREPARED**  
before that we would  
**WALK** in  
them  
**EPHESIANS 2:10**

# Letter to the Ephesians

## Overview and Historical Background

**New Hope Missionary Baptist Church**  
**Dr. David L. Roberson, Pastor**  
**23455 W. Nine Mile Road**  
**Southfield, MI**



# Letter to the Ephesians Overview

## Resources

- Bible
- Teaching Schedule
- Participant Note Sheets
- Map of Ephesus
- Background/Historical Context Information
- A Chronology of Paul's Writings
- Ephesians Outline



# Letter to the Ephesians Overview

## Topics

- Authorship
- Date Written
- Setting/Historical Context
- Audience/Addressees
- Occasion and Purpose for Writing
- The Message
- Main Themes
- Outline



# Letter to the Ephesians Overview

Open it  
Questions

1. What builds a friendship?



# Letter to the Ephesians Overview

Open it  
Questions

2. What words would you use to describe what makes a friendship last?



# Letter to the Ephesians Overview

## Introduction

As you read Ephesians, see this book as more than an important, theological document for an ancient church. It is the Holy Spirit-inspired letter to followers of Christ with whom Paul had lived and worked for three years. He was committed to them and to the churches in that area. This is a letter bathed in love.

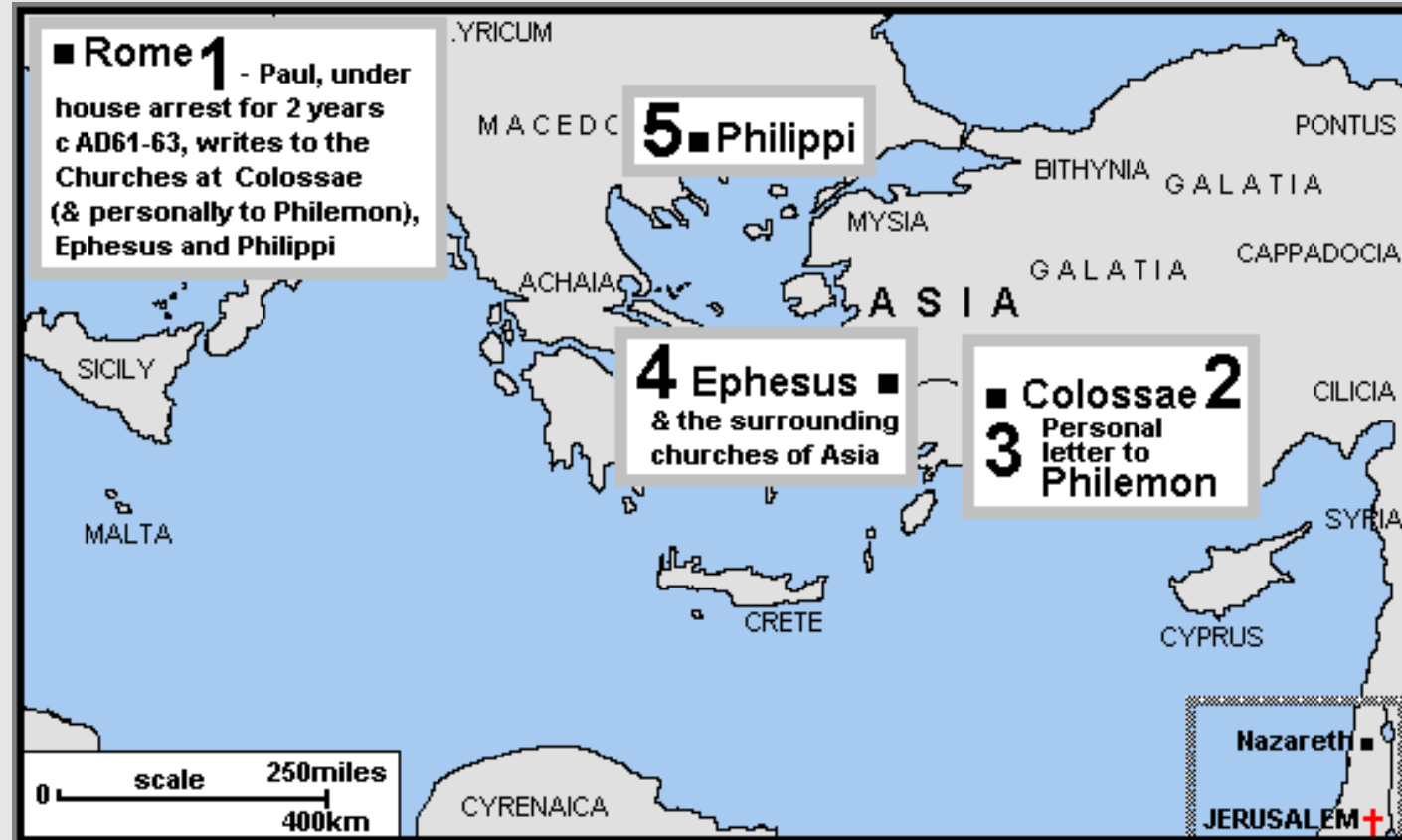




# Letter to the Ephesians

## Map of Paul's Letter Writing Locations

Introduction





# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Authorship

3. Who is the author of Ephesians.  
(1:1 and 3:1)



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

Two major headings in this book ([1:1](#) and [3:1](#)) show that this epistle claims to have been written by Paul the apostle. This claim is confirmed by many church fathers, including Polycarp, Origen, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Most scholars throughout the history of the church have affirmed the same.

### Authorship



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Authorship

“Paul, an apostle (special messenger) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah), by the divine will (the purpose and the choice of God) to the saints (the consecrated, set-apart ones) at Ephesus who are also faithful *and* loyal *and* steadfast in Christ Jesus:”

**(1:1 AMPC)**



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Authorship

“For this reason [because I preached that you are thus built up together], I, Paul, [am] the prisoner of Jesus the Christ for the sake *and* on behalf of you Gentiles—”

**(3:1 AMPC)**



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

4. Approximately when was Ephesians written?

**Date  
Written**

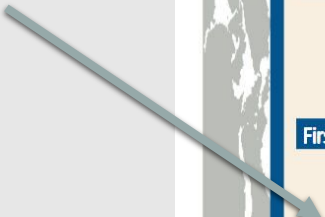
**See handouts:**

- “A Chronology of Paul’s Writings”*
- “Ephesians Background and Historical Context”*



# Letter to the Ephesians Background and Historical Context

Date  
Written

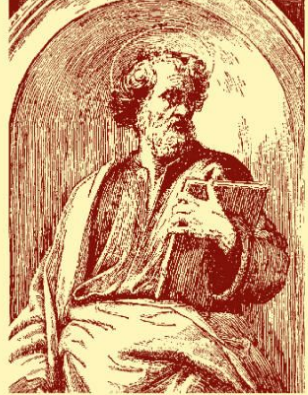


## A Chronology of Paul's Writings

1st Missionary Journey (45 - 47 A.D.)		
No books were written		
2nd Missionary Journey (51 - 54 A.D.)		
1.	1 Thessalonians (52 - 53 A.D.)	Written from Corinth
2.	2 Thessalonians (52 - 53 A.D.)	Written from Corinth
3rd Missionary Journey (54 - 58 A.D.)		
3.	1 Corinthians (Spring, 57 A.D.)	Written from Ephesus
4.	2 Corinthians (Autumn, 57 A.D.)	Written from Macedonia
5.	Galatians (Winter, 57 A.D.)	Written from Greece
6.	Romans (Spring 58, A.D.)	Written from Corinth
First Roman Imprisonment (61 - 63 A.D.)		
7.	Philemon (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
8.	Colossians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
9.	Ephesians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
10.	Philippians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
Between First & Second Imprisonments (63 - 67 A.D.)		
11.	1 Timothy (67 A.D.)	Written from Macedonia
12.	Titus (67 A.D.)	Written from Ephesus
Second Roman Imprisonment (68 A.D.)		
13.	2 Timothy (68 A.D.)	Written from Rome

"I Paul have written it with mine own hand"

Philemon 19



NOTE: { It is believed by many that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. If in fact he did, that would bring to 14 the total number of books of the New Testament written by this great soldier of the cross.

Barnes' Bible Charts



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Date  
Written**

□ Paul wrote Ephesians about A.D. 61 or 62, from Rome, during Paul's imprisonment there.





# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Date  
Written**

- Paul was arrested in Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey (around A.D. 58)
- Paul appealed to Caesar to send him to Rome.



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Date  
Written**

- Paul was sent to Rome and placed under house arrest (A.D. 61-63)
- Paul preached to Jews, Gentiles, and the Roman Guard.
- Paul wrote four (4) letters commonly called the “Prison Epistles” or letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon)



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

5. What are some key aspects of the City of Ephesus and the surrounding area?

**Setting:**  
*The City of  
Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

- ❑ Ephesus was the most important city outside of Rome that Paul visited.
- ❑ Easy access to the Aegean Sea made Ephesus a port city and a gateway to Asia

**Setting:**  
*The City of  
Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

A strong source of income for Ephesus was the great temple of Artemis (Diana), the fertility goddess. Four times larger than the Parthenon, this shrine, considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was revered throughout Asia and the world ([Acts 19:27](#)).

**Setting:**  
*The City of  
Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

□ Ephesus had an immense amphitheater (see [Acts 19:27-29](#)) that could seat more than twenty-five thousand spectators. The city was positioned between two mountainous ridges. The eastern ridge formed the foundation for this theater, as it had been cut out of the mountainside.

**Setting:**  
*The City of  
Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

□ Near the Amphitheatre stood the stadium, or racecourse, where fights between wild animals or between men and animals were held. A great marble street, the main street of Ephesus, ran northwest from the theater to the harbor. The street was flanked on both sides by an elaborate colonnade [arcade or walkway].

**Setting:**  
*The City of  
Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

The city's commercial life and prosperity came to depend on the many thousands of tourists and worshipers visiting the temple, theater, and stadium annually. No wonder the populace became alarmed, and then enraged, when told that Paul's teachings would undermine the worship of Artemis and thus endanger their livelihood and the city's economy ([Acts 19:23-41](#)).

**Setting:**  
*The City of  
Ephesus*





# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Setting:**

*The Church  
in Ephesus*

6. In what two places did Paul minister while in Ephesus?



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

As was his custom, Paul began his ministry in Ephesus among Jews, in the synagogue ([Acts 19:8](#)). When the Jewish leaders refused to listen, Paul left and taught in a rented lecture hall [Tyrannus] ([Acts 19:9-10](#)). During the next two years, many Jews and Greeks came to hear the gospel and believed ([Acts 19:11, 17](#)). At the writing of this letter, the church consisted mostly of Gentiles ([2:11-19](#); [3:1](#)).

**Setting:**  
*The Church  
in Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

7. What other spiritual leaders preached and taught in the church in Ephesus?

**Setting:**  
*The Church  
in Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Setting:**  
*The Church  
in Ephesus*

- Apollos
- Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:24-28)
- Elders (Acts 20:17)
- Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3)
- Apostle John



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

8. What did God have to say about the church at Ephesus?

**Setting:**

*The Church  
in Ephesus*



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Setting:**  
*The Church  
in Ephesus*

The church in Ephesus is mentioned in the book of Revelation. God commends the believers, but also warns them” ([Revelation 2:2-5](#)).



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

<sup>2</sup> I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

<sup>3</sup> And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

<sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent

**(Revelation 2:2-5 KJV)**

**Setting:**

***The Church  
in Ephesus***



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Audience/ Addressees

9. To whom was this letter addressed? (Ephesians 1:1)





# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Audience/ Addressees

“Paul, an apostle (special messenger) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah), by the divine will (the purpose and the choice of God) to the saints (the consecrated, set-apart ones) at Ephesus who are also faithful *and* loyal *and* steadfast in Christ Jesus:” (**Ephesians 1:1 NLT**)



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Audience/ Addressees

Most likely, this letter was addressed to several churches in the district around Ephesus—namely, the Roman province of Asia (commonly known as Asia Minor). The letter was not really intended to be only for the church at Ephesus. Most modern scholars are convinced that it was an encyclical (circular letter) meant for many churches in Asia, including Ephesus.



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Audience/ Addressees

Paul's message in this letter is both intimate and global. Intimate—because of his close association with the Ephesians. Global—because the truths he wanted to communicate were for all the churches. And this is why Ephesians has had such an appeal to all believers throughout the church age. Next to Paul's letter to the Romans, this is the one epistle that could also be called a treatise [essay, article, or tract] rather than an occasional letter. Ephesians presents the grand picture of God's eternal purpose for the Christian church.



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Occasion  
and  
Purpose**

10. Why was this letter written?



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

Paul felt keenly responsible for the spiritual health of the churches that he had planted. His deep concern led him to revisit many of those churches on subsequent travels, and it certainly motivated him to write letters and to send other teachers and leaders after him. In Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders, he urged them to be on guard for false teachers ([Acts 20:28-31](#)).

**Occasion  
and  
Purpose**



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

Paul knew that young believers, like little lambs, would be easy prey for false teachers and egotistical preachers who could devastate the flock. So Paul wrote to strengthen and mature his Christian brothers and sisters in their faith by explaining the purpose and power of the church—helping them see the big picture—and by calling believers to sound doctrine and holy living.

**Occasion  
and  
Purpose**



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Occasion and Purpose

Unencumbered with local problems—such as those found in the churches at Corinth and Galatia--Paul's description in Ephesians soars high above any mundane [ordinary or routine] affairs and takes us into heaven, where we are presented with a heavenly view of the church as it fits into God's eternal plan.



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

Paul wanted his readers to see God's eternal purpose for the church.

Paul claimed to have received a revelation about the church that had never before been known—that the church would be comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers, sharing equal status in the body as coheirs, comembers of the body, and joint partakers. He wrote about this revelation so that all the believers could understand the secret plan (see [3:1-9](#)).

**Occasion  
and  
Purpose**





# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Occasion and Purpose

Today, many Christians take their faith and their church for granted. Thus, they become critical of fellow believers, the worship services, and church leaders, and often they become susceptible to wrong doctrines. As you read Ephesians, examine your attitudes in light of Paul's description of the church, the body of Christ. And consider how you might encourage and strengthen fellow believers and spiritual leaders.



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### The Message

11. What message or messages did Paul intend to convey in this letter?



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

The letter to the Ephesians is divided into two parts:

### The Message

- Doctrinal Foundations (Chapters 1-3)
- Life Application (Chapters 4-6)



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

### Main Themes

12. What are the main themes in the letter to the Ephesians?



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

- God's Purpose
- Christ the Center
- The Living Church
- The New Family
- Christian Conduct

**Main  
Themes**



# Letter to the Ephesians

## Background and Historical Context

**Outline of  
the Letter**

See Handout: “*Ephesians Outline*”