

## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS - An Introduction

ON BOARD: "the greatest piece of writing in all history" - "the divinest composition of man" (Samuel Taylor Coleridge) - "surpasses all human eloquence"

### Hand out outlines

#### I. THE CONTROVERSIES

##### A. Was Paul the author?

1. Internal evidence is indisputable - style, usage of "in Christ", fervor for God's truth and glory.
2. External evidence in Origin (210-250), Clement of Alexandria (190-200), Tertullian (193-216)

##### B. Was the letter written to the Ephesians?

1. Tertullian, "We have it on the true tradition of the church that this epistle was sent to the Ephesians, not to the Laodiceans. Marcion [the heretic], however, was very desirous of giving it the new title . . ."
2. A few ancient Greek mss. are missing "in Ephesus" - which some believe because it was a circular letter ("I have *heard* of the faith . . ." 1:15) and ("if so be that you have *heard* of the stewardship . . . given to me . . ." 3:2) and no mention of his ministry in Ephesus and no personal greetings.
3. Four other Pauline epistles don't contain greetings, yet Romans (a church that Paul never founded) has a large number of greetings.
4. ALL the ancient manuscripts except Marcion's have the title: *To the Ephesians*.
5. My conclusion: It was both written to the Ephesians *and* was a circular letter. I agree with Tertullian, "While writing to some, the Apostle wrote to all."

#### II. THE CITY

##### A. Historically - see map in your bible - [Hand out Ephesus coin/drawings](#)

"According to legend, the Ionian prince Androclos founded Ephesus in the eleventh century B.C. The legend says that as Androclos searched for a new Greek settlement, he turned to the Delphi oracles for guidance. The oracles told him a boar and a fish would show him the new location. One day, as Androclos was frying fish over an open fire, a fish flopped out of the frying pan and landed in the nearby bushes. A spark ignited the bushes and a wild boar ran out. Recalling the oracles' wisdom, Androclos built his new settlement where the bushes stood and called it Ephesus.

Another legend says Ephesus was founded by the Amazons, a tribe of female warriors, and that the city was named after their queen, Ephesia. Much of Ephesus's ancient history is unrecorded and sketchy. What is known is that in the seventh century B.C., Ephesus fell under the rule of the Lydian Kings and became a thriving city where men and women enjoyed equal opportunities. It was also the birthplace of the renowned philosopher Heraclitus. The Lydian King Croesus, who ruled from 560 B.C. to 547 B.C., was most famous for funding the rebuilding of the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus. Artemis was the goddess of the hunt, chastity, childbirth, wild animals and the wilderness.

She was also one of the most revered Greek deities. Modern-day excavations have revealed that three smaller Artemis temples preceded the Croesus temple. In 356 B.C., a crazed man named Herostratus burned down the Temple of Artemis. The Ephesians rebuilt the temple even bigger. [It was burned 7 times altogether] It was estimated to be four times larger than

the [Parthenon](#) and became known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The temple was later destroyed and never rebuilt. Little remains of it today, although some of its remnants reside in the [British Museum](#), including a column with Croesus's signature.

### Lysimachus

"In 546 B.C., Ephesus fell to the [Persian Empire](#), along with the rest of Anatolia. Ephesus continued to thrive even as other Ionian cities rebelled against Persian rule. In 334 B.C., [Alexander the Great](#) defeated the Persians and entered Ephesus. Upon his death in 323 B.C., one of his generals, Lysimachus, took over the city and renamed it Arsineia. Lysimachus moved Ephesus two miles away and built a new harbor and new defensive walls. The Ephesian people, however, wouldn't relocate and remained in their homes until Lysimachus forced them to move. In 281 B.C., Lysimachus was killed at the Battle of Corupedium and the city was renamed Ephesus again. In 263 B.C., Ephesus fell under Egyptian rule along with much of the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucid king Antiochus III took back Ephesus in 196 B.C.; however, after being defeated at the Battle of Magnesia six years later, Ephesus fell under Pergamon rule.

### Ephesus Under Roman Rule

"In 129 B.C., King Attalos of Pergamon left Ephesus to the Roman Empire in his will and the city became the seat of the regional Roman governor. The reforms of Caesar [Augustus](#) brought Ephesus to its most prosperous time, which lasted until the third century A.D. Most of the Ephesian ruins seen today such as the enormous amphitheater, the Library of Celsus, the public space (agora) and the aqueducts were built or rebuilt during Augustus's reign. During the reign of [Tiberius](#), Ephesus flourished as a port city. A business district was opened around 43 B.C. to service the massive amounts of goods arriving or departing from the man-made harbor and from caravans traveling the ancient Royal Road. According to some sources, Ephesus was at the time second only to Rome as a cosmopolitan center of culture and commerce."

### B. In Paul's day

"Ephesus was a celebrated city of Ionia in Asia Minor, and was about 40 miles south of Smyrna, and near the mouth of the river Cayster. The river, though inferior in beauty to the Meander which flows south of it, waters a fertile valley of the ancient Ionia. Ionia was the most beautiful and fertile part of Asia Minor; was settled almost wholly by Greek colonies; and it embosomed Pergamos, Smyrna, Ephesus, and Miletus; see "Travels" of Anacharsis, i. 91, 208; vi. 192, 97, 98. The climate of Ionia is represented as remarkably mild, and the air as pure and sweet, and this region became early celebrated for everything that constitutes softness and effeminacy in life. Its people were distinguished for amiableness and refinement of manners, and also for luxury, for music and dancing, and for the seductive arts festivals occupied them at home, or attracted them to neighboring cities, where the men appeared in magnificent habits, and the women in all the elegance of female ornament, and with all the desire of pleasure. It was in a rich region of country, and seems to have risen into importance mainly because it became the favorite resort of foreigners in the worship of Diana, and owed its celebrity to its temple more than to anything else. This city was once, however, the most splendid city in Asia Minor. Stephens, the geographer, gives it the title of "Epiphanestate" (Most Illustrious). Pliny styles it "the Ornament of Asia." In Roman times it was the metropolis of Asia, and unquestionably rose to a degree of splendor that was surpassed by few, if any, oriental cities.

That for which the city was most celebrated was the Temple of Diana. This temple was 425 feet in length, and 220 feet in width. It was encompassed by 127 pillars, each 60 feet in height, which were presented by as many kings. Some of those pillars, it is said, are yet to be seen in the mosque of Sophia at Constantinople, having been removed there when the Church of Sophia was erected. These, however, were the pillars that constituted a part of the temple after it had been burned and was repaired, though it is probable that the same pillars were retained in the second temple which had constituted the glory of the first. All the provinces of Asia Minor contributed to the erection of this splendid temple, and 200 years were consumed in building of it.

The temple and streets were strewn with immoral goddess prostitutes. People could experience

more of the goddess' power by sexually intimacies with her priests and priestesses. It was a [totally] wicked city. Immorality flourished and flooded over into the society and families."

### C. Since Paul's day -

The Temple of Diana started to be dismantled by 282 A.D. - Trajan sent the gates to Constantinople. The Sythians (Goths) sacked and burned it circa 255 A.D. Constantine decreed that all temples should be closed, all sacrifices ended and all treasures in them be given to the government, circa 348 A.D. The temple was completely gone by 399 A.D. when emperors Archadius and Honorius decreed all temples to be destroyed unless they could be used as churches.

The city of Ephesus met the same fate, disintegrating through the years at the hands of men and nature. The church continued as a strong influence into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, but as the city fell, so did the church that had lost its first love.

## III. THE TIME OF WRITING

- A. Ephesians 3:1 - In a Roman prison - Acts 28:30,31 - Circa 62 A.D.
- B. Colossians and Philemon written at same time, Philippians at the end of his imprisonment

## IV. PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP TO EPHEBUS

- A. Acts 18:18-21 - Passed through leaving Priscilla and Aquila there on his way to keeping a vow in preparation of attending a feast in Jerusalem. First to preach the gospel to them. Second missionary journey.
- B. Acts 19 - 20:1 - Third missionary journey.
- C. Acts 20:16-38 - There 3 years vs. 31. Left and came back on his way to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost.

## V. STATE OF THE CHURCH

- A. Revelation 2:1-7 - Recipients of apostolic truth and Holy Spirit gifts. - Able to discern false doctrine and evil. Labored diligently in keeping that truth in love. What was their 'first love' that was lost years later?
- B. Acts 20:27-31, 36-38 - Fully equipped to worship God and war against Satan's schemes.

## VI. IMMEDIATE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

- A. To encourage them - He's no longer with them, but God is greater in keeping power and loving care
- B. To strengthen them against inevitable opposition - Grievous wolves are predicted - the whole truth must known and kept - the surrounding evil of the city will try to infiltrate, intimidate and destroy the church and probably did eventually.
- C. To elevate them in their own eyes - Christ has given them heavenly citizenship equal to the Jews

- D. To remind them of their Christian unity, gifts, holy walk and relationships, battle plans, and duties in prayer

## VII. UNIVERSAL PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

- A. As a circular letter, it applied to all who read it at the time
- B. As the Word of God it applies to all believers through the ages. [Ageless](#)

## VIII. OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

- A. God is magnified in and through Christ's work in salvation - 1:3-14 - [This is no new doctrine, Paul having taught there for 3 years.](#)
- B. Christ is magnified in His office as Head of the church - 1:15-23
- C. Spiritual blessings come through the gift of faith that reconciles us to God and makes us co-heirs with Christ - 2:1-22
- D. The mystery of the Gospel is revealed - unity and equality with the Jews - 3:1-21
- E. God in Christ has equipped the saints for ministry - 4:1-16
- F. Instructions are given on how to live the "new man" life that is pleasing to God - 4:17-5:1-21
- G. Instructions are given on God pleasing relationships - 5:22-6:9
- H. Spiritual battle plans are drawn - 6:10-20
- I. Paul pens his final salutation and benediction - 6:21-24

[Any questions you want answered as we dive in?](#)