

EPHESIANS OVERVIEW

Outline:

I. Salutation (1:1 & 2)

II. God's work of reconciliation in Christ (1:3-3:21)

III. Living in response to God's work in Christ (4:1-6:20)

IV. Conclusion and Benediction (6:21-24)

Historical Background & Introduction:

The first verses of Ephesians Chapter 1 & 3 indicate that this Epistle is from Paul. This claim is further confirmed by the testimonies of Irenaeus [Against Heresis, 5.2, 3; 1.8, 5]; Clement of Alexandria [Miscellanies, 4, P. 65, and the Instructor, 1.8]; Origen [Against Celsus, 4, 211]. The epistle is also quoted by Valentinus in 120 A.D, Hippolytus [The Refutation of All Heresis, p. 193], Polycarp, Tertulian, and Ignatius all testify of its authenticity and canonicity.

The letter was addressed to the Ephesians during the early part of Paul's imprisonment at Rome (immediately after this letter, Paul writes to the Colossians). Both letters bear a close resemblance in many passages, the apostle having in his mind generally the same great truths in writing both.

However, the oldest copies of Ephesians do not name the city of Ephesus in the opening verse. Some believe because of this, that the letter may not have originally been written to the Ephesians, but was perhaps a *circular letter*, sent to multiple churches in Asia Minor. In this view, the letter eventually came to be associated with Ephesus because it was the most prominent city in the area.

Paul wrote Ephesians from prison (3:1; 6:20), perhaps in Rome, Caesarea, or even Ephesus itself. The letter was more than likely written between 54-63 AD. Ephesus was a harbor city located in southwest Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey); capital of the Roman province of Asia. Paul was born in Tarsus, a Hellenistic city in the Roman province of Cilicia in modern day Turkey. According to the book of Acts, Paul was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28). In his letters Paul traces his Jewish ancestry back to the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5).



Ephesians was written to a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians (majority non-Jewish Christians). Ephesus was known for its idol temple of Artemis or Diana. Artemis is the Greek goddess who protects women. She is believed to have been born of Zeus and Leto. Diana is a Roman goddess, originally an Italian goddess and independent from Artemis, associated with woodlands, magic, and the moon. Since Greek and Roman cultures were still very intertwined during this time, both goddesses' names were eventually merged together.

The temple was burnt down but then rebuilt at an enormous cost and was later known as one of the great wonders of the world.

A man by the name of Tychicus was one of Paul's many companions. He is mentioned 5 times in the Bible with the first time being in Acts 20:4 during Paul's 3rd missionary journey. He is mentioned as one of Paul's companions on the way from Corinth to Jerusalem to deliver a gift to the church there (Rom. 15:25 & 26). Tychicus was entrusted by Paul to deliver his letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians and to bring them news about his well-being. Tychicus is mentioned in Eph. 6:21. Paul uses Tychicus as his messenger while in prison to encourage the saints and give them hope in Christ.¹

One Commentator said, "The object of the Epistle is to set forth the ground, the course, and the aim and end of the Church of the Faithful in Christ. He speaks to the Ephesians as a type or sample of the Church universal." Hence, 'the Church' throughout the Epistle is spoken of in singular form, not plural – "churches." Another Commentator said, "Ephesians gives a cosmic view of God's plans for the world, explaining the mystery of the gospel." Perhaps, the theme of Ephesians can be summed up in 3 words – "Unity in Christ."

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Tychicus-in-the-Bible.html>