

EPHESIANS CONTEXTUAL STUDY

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE STORY BEHIND THE TEXT

While Paul refers to himself as the author of Ephesians it is debated whether he is actually the author. However at the same time is regarded as one of his greatest letters. 55 verses of Ephesians are very similar in wording to the book to the Colossians. Ephesians is also different in vocabulary, style and doctrine compared to other letters from Paul . It is thought that Ephesians was used as a circular letter and earliest manuscripts even exclude “at Ephesus”, however this is not confirmation that it was not intended for Ephesus. Paul also does not mention any individuals by name which is a common practice for him. It is commonly thought that he may not have mentioned names because he was there for so long and had so many relationships that he did not want to leave anyone out. This letter was delivered by Tychicus who also delivered Colossians. Paul stayed in Ephesus for a short time during his 2nd missionary journey and for 3 years during his 3rd. (BKC)

Date:

- Paul was a prisoner when he wrote Ephesians. Similar to other books it is difficult to determine where he was. Caesarea (57-59 AD) and Rome (60-62 AD) are the most likely. (BKC)

Purpose:

- Warning people of evil teachers and even false teaching from professing believers. (BKC)
- To teach that Jewish and Gentile believers are one in Christ. This is demonstrated through love. (BKC)
- It is possible that the letter would have been passed on to Colosse, Laodicea and other churches in the area. (HNTC)
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City of Ephesus:

- Capital city of province of Asia. modern Turkey(BKC)
- Population about 300,000 (HNTC)
- Leading trade center in Roman Empire (HNTC)
- Worship goddess Diana(HNTC)
- City was wealthy and pagan(HNTC)

LITERARY CONTEXT: THE STORY AROUND THE TEXT

The structure and writing of Ephesians is similar to Colossians. Over half of Ephesians has identical thoughts or sayings as Colossians. At the same time Ephesians is more instructive and provides a larger picture or what is being discussed. (HNTC)

Theological Themes

- Redemption (1:7)
- Divine intention for human race (1:3-14)
- Grace (1:2)
- Predestination (1:4-5)
- Reconciliation and Union w/ Christ (2:1-21)

Other Themes

- "Re-creation of the human family according to God's original intention for it." (HNTC)

Words

- LOVE
 - "Love" (agapao) is used 9 times compared to 23 times in all his other writings. (HNTC)
 - "Love" (agape) is used 10 times compared to 65 in other writings. (HNTC)
 - More than 1/6 of uses of "love" are in Ephesians. (HNTC)

Outline Analysis (TNTC)

1. Introduction (1:1–23)

- a. Greeting (1:1–2)
- b. Praise for God's purpose and blessings in Christ (1:3–14)
- c. Prayer for divine enlightenment (1:15–23)

2. Life in Christ (2:1–3:21)

- a. New life from the dead (2:1–10)
- b. The reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (2:11–22)
- c. The privilege of proclamation (3:1–13)
- d. Renewed prayer (3:14–21)

3. Unity in the body of Christ (4:1–16)

- a. Maintaining the unity (4:1–6)
- b. Diversity in unity (4:7–16)

4. Personal standards (4:17–5:21)

- a. New life to replace the old (4:17–24)
- b. Truth and love to replace falsehood and bitterness (4:25–5:2)
- c. Light to replace the darkness (5:3–14)
- d. Wisdom to replace folly (5:15–21)

5. Relationships (5:22–6:9)

- a. Husbands and wives (5:22–33)
- b. Children and parents (6:1–4)
- c. Servants and masters (6:5–9)

6. Conclusion (6:10–24)

- a. The Christian conflict (6:10–20)
- b. Final message and greeting (6:21–24)

Immediate Context

Paul opens this letter setting a foundation for who they are in Christ. Paul lets the people know that they were chosen or predestined, redeemed through the blood of Christ, and have an inheritance. Because of the choosing from God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the filling of the Holy Spirit they can have hope in Christ and bring praise to His glory. This is a foundation that followers should return to in all circumstances.