

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

INTRODUCTION

A. Author

1. This is a letter from Paul to the church at Ephesus.
2. It is supported internally by two references to Paul in the letter.
 - a. Ephesians 1:1, *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:*
 - b. Ephesians 3:1, *For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles*
3. It is supported externally by early church tradition, including Clement of Rome in 95 A.D.
4. Some argue that there are differences in vocabulary and style. Such arguments are very subject and many attribute the richness of theology in Ephesians to Paul's own growth and understanding of the nature of the church.

B. Date of Writing

1. It was written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, around 60 AD, note Acts 28:16-31.
2. It was probably delivered by Tychicus, Ephesians 6:21-22, who also took Paul's letter to the Colossians.
3. It was possibly Paul's first Prison Epistle which includes Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians.
4. It was written about the same time as Colossians and Philemon with Philippians written about one year later.

C. Recipients

1. It is assumed that the epistle was written to the church at Ephesus.
 - a. Ephesus was a leading city in the Roman Empire with a population of 300,000.
 - b. It was the center of worship of the pagan goddess Diana.
 - c. It became the leading church in the province of Asia which is now western Turkey.
2. *In Ephesus*, (1:1) was omitted in some early Greek manuscripts.
 - a. Some suggest that the letter was a circular letter addressed to the churches of Asia Minor and forwarded from church to church.
 - b. If that were the case, it could explain Paul's reference in Colossians 4:16, where he requested that the epistle to the Colossians be read along with the epistle from Laodicea. It may refer to a copy of Ephesians with the name *Laodicea* in a blank space so the letter could also be read there.

D. Paul's contact with the city of Ephesus

1. He visited Ephesus at the end of his second missionary journey where he left Priscilla and Aquila, Acts 18:19-21.
2. He returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey and stayed there for nearly 3 years, 53-56 A.D., Acts 20:31.
 - a. He baptized a dozen of John the Baptist's followers, Acts 19:1-7.
 - b. Miracles were taking place, Acts 19:11-12.
 - c. Sorcerers were converted, Acts 19:17-20.
 - d. The city rioted over the loss of business as many came to Christ and stopped worshipping idols, Acts 19:23-41.
3. He met with the Ephesian elders while on his way to Jerusalem, Acts 20:17-38.

E. Theology of the Epistle to the Ephesians

1. The lordship of Christ over all creation, note Ephesians 1:19-23 and 6:12.
2. God initiates salvation, Ephesians 1:4-5, 11.
3. The roles of the Godhead in salvation.
 - a. The Father chooses, Ephesians 1:4.
 - b. The Son redeems, Ephesians 1:7.
 - c. The Holy Spirit seals and guarantees redemption, Ephesians 1:13-14.
4. The total depravity of mankind, Ephesians 2:1-2.
5. The mystery of the Gospel which tears down social barriers, as between Jews and Gentiles, Ephesians 2:14.
6. The centrality and unity of the church, Ephesians 4:4-6.
7. The sanctity of Christian marriage, Ephesians 5:22-33.
8. Godly armor for spiritual warfare, Ephesians 6:10-20.
9. God's concern for His children. God is called *Father* more in Ephesians than in any other of Paul's epistles.

F. Quotes concerning Ephesians

1. Nelson Publishers, *Except for the book of Romans, the book of Ephesians is the most carefully written presentation of Christian theology in the New Testament. Paul wrote this epistle to make Christians more aware of the riches they have in Christ and to motivate them to draw upon these spiritual resources in daily living.*
2. John Stott, *Nobody can emerge from a careful reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians with a privatized gospel. For Ephesians is the gospel of the church. It sets forth God's eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new society which stands out in bright relief against the sombre background of the old world.*

G. An outline of the Epistle to the Ephesians

1. Salutation and Prayer (1:1-23)
 - a. A salutation (1-2)
 - b. Praise for spiritual blessings in Christ (3)
 - c. The basis for redemption (4-14)
 - d. Thanksgiving and prayer (15-23)
2. The Christian's calling (2:1-3:13)
 - a. From death to life (1-10)
 - b. Our spiritual union in Christ (11-22)
 - c. The mystery of the church (3:1-21)
3. The Christian's conduct (4:1-6:9)
 - a. Walking in Godly unity (4:1-16)
 - b. Walking in holiness (4:17-32)
 - c. Walking in love (5:1-6)
 - d. Walking in light (5:7-14)
 - e. Walking in wisdom (5:15-6:9)
4. The demands of spiritual warfare (10-20)
 - a. Paul encouraged Ephesian Christians to be strong by means of God's power (10)
 - b. The spiritual power that can withstand Satan is the whole armor of God (11-12)
 - c. Paul commanded Ephesian Christians to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand firm (13-18)
 - d. Paul's personal request (19-20)
5. Conclusion (21-24)