

Ephesians

Lesson Two

Introduction to the Book of Ephesians

Introduction:

1. Several lessons have been spent discussing the background of the church at Ephesus.
2. The culture was one of Roman liberty mixed with paganism, occult practices and various forms of Judaism.
3. With the establishing of the church in Ephesus, there was initial confusion over the preaching of Apollos.
4. But, as Paul spent about 3 years in the city, the church grew and became evangelistic.
5. There were confrontations with other religions, but the truth was preached and many were converted.
6. Finally, Paul left Ephesus; but, before returning to Jerusalem he had an important conversation with the elders of the church – warning them of dangers to the flock.
7. About 5 years later, Paul wrote this epistle back to the church at Ephesus.

I. Author

- A. The book claims to have been written by Paul (1:1; 3:1).
- B. This best fits the history of the city and the church in Ephesus.
- C. There is really not doubt about Paul's authorship.

II. Date

- A. Paul's lengthy stay in Ephesus began around AD 54.
 1. He had been hindered by the Spirit from going there earlier (Acts 16:6).
 2. He had visited the city only briefly on his way back to Antioch at the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21).
- B. He remained in the city for three years, meaning that he left around AD 57 (Acts 20:31).
- C. According to Paul, he penned this letter as a prisoner (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20).
- D. Paul became a prisoner in Jerusalem, but he was eventually transferred to Rome.
- E. This was about 5 years after he left Ephesus.
- F. Thus, the book of Ephesians was written around AD 62.

III. Occasion and Purpose

- A. There does not seem to have been a specific event or problem that led to the writing of this epistle.
- B. Instead, it seems that Paul had an opportunity to send a letter to this congregation as another epistle was being delivered to the Colossians.
 1. Paul sent letters to the churches in Colossae and Laodicea by Tychicus and Onesimus (cf. Colossians 4:7-9, 16).
 2. The book of Colossians addressed the nature of Christ as the head of the church – and preeminent in all things (Colossians 1:18).
 3. It would be convenient for Paul to use the occasion of the sending of this epistle to also send a letter to the church at Ephesus.
 4. They were dear to him; and, Paul desired to know how the congregation fared (Ephesians 6:21-22).
- C. Thus, the book of Ephesians is complimentary to the book of Colossians.

- D. Ephesians presents the church as the body of Christ – and the eternal purpose of God.
- E. It is a reminder to the Gentile Christians of God's great wisdom and love, shown in the fulfilling of His plan of redemption.
- F. It becomes a plea for unity in and faithfulness to the one Lord and His one body, the church.
- G. While addressing these matters, Paul also continued to argue against the paganism, occultism and idolatry of the culture of Ephesus.

IV. Key Words

- A. "Heavenly places" (1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10)
- B. "In Christ" (1:1; 1:3; 1:10; 1:12; 1:20; 2:6; 2:10; 2:13; 3:6; 3:11; cf. 4:21)
- C. "Church" (1:22; 3:10; 3:21; 5:23; 5:24; 5:25; 5:27; 5:29; 5:32)
- D. "Body" (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; 4:12; 4:16; 5:23; 5:30)