

## **The Epistle to the Ephesians**

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### **AN INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

You are about to embark on a comprehensive study of Ephesians, one of the most remarkable books of the Bible. Dr. A.T. Pierson called Ephesians “The Alps of the New Testament.” The Apostle covers majestic heights and soars to the pinnacle of church truth with sweeping strokes of his pen. In Ephesians Paul ties eternity to time, heaven to earth, and Christ to His Church.

While Romans, without question, remains the masterpiece of logic relative to salvation and the Gospel of Christ, Ephesians must be regarded as the epitome of truth relating to the Church.

Old Testament prophets foresaw Christ’s birth and sufferings and His coming to earth in power and great glory to reign over the whole world, but they did not foresee the Church or the dispensation of grace as given to the Apostle Paul.

The Apostles Peter, James, and John wrote by inspiration of the Spirit concerning many remarkable truths. Only in the writings of the Apostle Paul however, particularly his Ephesians Epistle, do we clearly see the doctrine, nature, position, walk and destiny of the Church. (Note especially Ephesians 3:3-6.)

#### **IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON**

- ❑ It is important to know something about Ephesus, the environment in which Paul labored for three years.
- ❑ Naturally, we should also learn who wrote the Epistle and why.
- ❑ In this lesson you will learn to whom Ephesians was actually written, the purpose and nature of Ephesians, some “keys” to this Epistle, and a few simple outlines to help you gain an overview of the entire Epistle to the Ephesians.

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### **THE LESSON**

#### **I. THE CITY OF EPHESUS**

At the time of Paul, Ephesus was a large and luxurious city, bordering the Aegean Sea. It was situated in the area of Ionia in the southwest corner of Asia Minor, now known as Turkey. Its climate was remarkably mild and its people were genial and well mannered. They loved music, pleasure and luxury. The historian Pliny described it as “The Ornament of Asia.”

The city was world-famous for its worship of Diana, a goddess claimed to be an image of an eastern goddess named Artemis, who had supposedly fallen from Heaven (Acts 19:23-41). People came from all over the then-known world to worship in the splendid temple of Diana.

Ephesus was also the residence of the Roman proconsul, and the seat of the Courts of Justice for all of Asia Minor.

#### **II. THE AUTHORSHIP**

For almost 2000 years there has been uninterrupted agreement among biblical scholars that the Apostle Paul authored this Epistle. Internal evidence springs from Paul’s own assertion – “Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:1). In Ephesians 3:1 Paul again makes it evident that he is the author. He writes, “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.” Paul’s writings are also identifiable by phrases unique to him and often referred to as Paulinisms, such as the key phrase “in heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; 3:10), and the phrase “in Christ” used numerous times throughout this Epistle.

### III. WHEN AND TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN?

- A. Time of Writing – Ephesians is one of four books written by Paul when he was a prisoner in Rome awaiting trial before Nero. The other books that make up what is called “the Prison Epistles” are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Since Paul was imprisoned about 59-60 AD, we must assume that Ephesians was written during the early 60’s, probably about 64 AD.
- B. To Whom It Was Written – There has been, and still is, a considerable amount of guessing concerning to whom this epistle was written. Some have conjectured that the Laodicean Epistle, mentioned in Colossians 4:16, is actually the Ephesians Epistle. Others, believe that Paul had in mind a much wider readership and usefulness for the following reasons:
1. The phrase “to the Ephesians” is not in the best manuscripts.
  2. There are no personal greetings or farewells common to Paul’s other letters.
  3. There is nothing in this letter about local church order or discipline.
- ◆ *There are those who believe Paul’s intent was for this Epistle’s influence to reach far beyond Ephesus. If this contention is correct, and I personally believe it is, then the first verse should read, “to the faithful in Christ Jesus anywhere.”*

### IV. THE NATURE OF THIS EPISTLE

Since the Ephesian church was made up primarily of Gentiles, much of what Paul wrote was addressed to them. Evidently these Gentile believers were Greek and Roman converts.

Note the following verses:

Ephesians 2:11 – “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh...”

Ephesians 3:1 – “...I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.”

Ephesians 3:5-6 – “...as it is now revealed...That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs...”(with believing Jews).

Ephesians 3:8 – “Unto me...is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

- ◆ *In Galatians Paul pleads with Jews to accept Gentiles as Christians – in Ephesians he implores Gentiles to be reconciled to believing Jews.*

### V. THE PURPOSE OF THIS EPISTLE

A. Paul’s purpose in Ephesians seems to be two-fold.

1. First, having been given a special dispensation for stewardship of God’s grace (Ephesians 3:2-3), his fervent desire was to make that grace known (Ephesians 3:7-8).

Note the following verses:

a. Ephesians 1:7 – “...we have...forgiveness...according to the riches of His grace.”

b. Ephesians 2:5,8 – “...by grace ye are saved....”

c. Ephesians 2:7 – God is yet to show us “...the exceeding riches of His grace....”

d. Ephesians 3:7 – “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.”

e. Ephesians 4:7 – “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

2. Paul’s second purpose was to unfold and make known the mystery, which in other ages was not made known, “...That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body...” (Ephesians 3:6). Believing Jews and Gentiles were to be considered one body. This body, consisting of born again Jews and Gentiles, was now to be reckoned as the true Church. Paul calls this Church “...the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God...” (Ephesians 3:9). It is God’s purpose, Paul’s purpose, and thus the purpose of this Ephesian Epistle, that through this CHURCH all mankind and all principalities and powers in the heavenlies might see the fellowship of this mystery and the wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Read Ephesians 3:2-11.

**VI. KEYS TO EPHESIANS (Memorize these Keys for the exam)**

The Key Verse – 1:3

The Key Chapter – 3

The Key Phrase – “in Heavenly places” or “in the Heavens” 1:3

The Key Thought – “in Christ” – This phrase is found many times in the Epistle.

The Theme – The CHURCH – 1:22; 5:25

**VII. SHORT OUTLINES TO PROVIDE YOU WITH AN OVERVIEW OF THE ENTIRE EPISTLE**

- A. Ephesians 1,2,3 – What to Believe
- Ephesians 4,5,6 – How to Behave
  
- B. Ephesians 1,2,3 – Doctrinal
- Ephesians 4,5,6 – Practical
  
- C. Ephesians 1,2,3 – The Wealth of the CHURCH
- Ephesians 4,5 – The Walk of the CHURCH
- Ephesians 6 – The Warfare of the CHURCH
  
- D. Ephesians 1:1-2 – Introduction
- Ephesians 1:3-3:21 – The Calling of the CHURCH
- Ephesians 4:1-6:9 – The Conduct of the CHURCH
- Ephesians 6:10-18 – The Conflict of the CHURCH
- Ephesians 6:19-24 – Conclusion

**(Memorize one of these outlines. You will be asked to write out one on the exam)**

**Ephesians**  
**Exam – Lesson 1**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice – Circle the letter in front of the correct answer. Only one answer is correct unless otherwise stated.

1. The main difference between Romans and Ephesians is: (Value 5 points)
  - a. Romans is doctrinal and Ephesians is experiential.
  - b. Romans is difficult to understand and Ephesians is simple.
  - c. Romans emphasizes salvation and Ephesians speaks more of the Church.
  
2. The Old Testament prophets failed to see: (Value 5 points)
  - a. the birth and suffering of Christ.
  - b. the dispensation of grace.
  - c. the coming of Christ in glory to reign over the world.
  
3. The city of Ephesus was located: (Value 5 points)
  - a. in what is now known as Turkey.
  - b. near Antioch.
  - c. in what is now known as Greece.
  
4. The false god worshipped in Ephesus was: (Value 5 points)
  - a. Zeus.
  - b. Diana.
  - c. Nero.
  
5. The internal evidence that Paul wrote the book of Ephesians is: (Value 10 points) (**Circle two answers**)
  - a. Paul said so himself.
  - b. Peter said that Paul wrote Ephesians.
  - c. it contains unique Pauline phrases.
  - d. because Paul was a prisoner.
  
6. Paul intended this epistle: (Value 5 points)
  - a. only for the believers in the city of Ephesus.
  - b. also for the believers in the city of Laodicea.
  - c. for believers anywhere.
  
7. The kind of people who made up the Church in Ephesus were: (Value 5 points)
  - a. Gentiles.
  - b. Jews.
  - c. a mixture of Jews and Gentiles.
  
8. In what way does Paul exhort the believers in the book of Galatians? (Value 5 points)
  - a. He asks the Jews to accept Gentiles as Christians.
  - b. He asks the Gentiles to accept the Jews who have become Christians.
  - c. He asks the government to stop persecuting the believers.

9. In what way does Paul exhort the believers in the book of Ephesians? (Value 5 points)
- He asks the Jews to accept Gentiles as Christians.
  - He asks the Gentiles to accept the Jews who have become Christians.
  - He asks the government to stop persecuting the believers.
10. What was Paul's first purpose for writing Ephesians as stated in Ephesians 3:7-8? (Open Bible)  
(Value 8 points)
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11. What was Paul's second purpose for writing this epistle as given in Ephesians 3:6? (Open Bible)  
(Value 8 points)
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12. What is the key verse of this book? \_\_\_\_\_ (Value 5 points)
13. What is the key chapter of this book? \_\_\_\_\_ (Value 5 points)
14. What is the key phrase of this book? \_\_\_\_\_ (Value 5 points)
15. What is the key thought of this book? \_\_\_\_\_ (Value 5 points)
16. What is the theme of this book? \_\_\_\_\_ (Value 5 points)
17. Write out one outline of the book. (Value 9 points)