



Walking Together in His Amazing Grace: A Study of Ephesians

Week 1: Welcome to Ephesus

Join the Wednesday Night Crew for a study of:

Walking Together in His Amazing Grace: A Study of Ephesians

Begins Wednesday, January 5th with Pastor Orleen and Pastor Robin. At the FLC, 6:30PM, in the auditorium.

- January 5th, 12th(gone), 19th (gone), 26th
- February 2nd, 9th(gone), 16th, 23rd
- March 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th
- April 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th

Ephesians 4:1 THE GOAL: Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- Do I understand this calling?
- Whatever that calling is, it takes:
ALL humility, gentleness, patience, putting up with one another in love, unity in the Spirit all bound up with peace.

Paul's Timeline with the Ephesians:

- **1st** Missionary Journey: Paul and Barnabas' - Acts 13:1–14:28 (**A.D. 45-48**) established Christianity in Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Phrygia (Asian peninsula)
- The city of Ephesus (multiple religions, gods, and goddesses – was west of those churches.)
- Corinthian church planted around A.D. 52.
- **2nd** Missionary Journey: Acts 18:18-21- about **A.D. 49–52**, Paul left Achaia (Greece) taking Aquila and Priscilla and perhaps Timothy with him. They stopped at Ephesus (the city where religions flourished).
- Paul did not stay but left Priscilla and Aquila and Timothy(?).
- Apollos would encounter Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and be instructed by them in the gospel (18:24–26) before moving on to become a missionary and itinerant teacher in the circle of Pauline churches (see, e.g., Acts 18:27–19:1; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6; 16:12; Tit 3:13).
- Paul sailed to Antioch.
- **3rd** Missionary Journey: Paul returned to Ephesus (Acts 20:31) (A.D. 52-57)
- **His ministry in Ephesus lasted two or three years.**

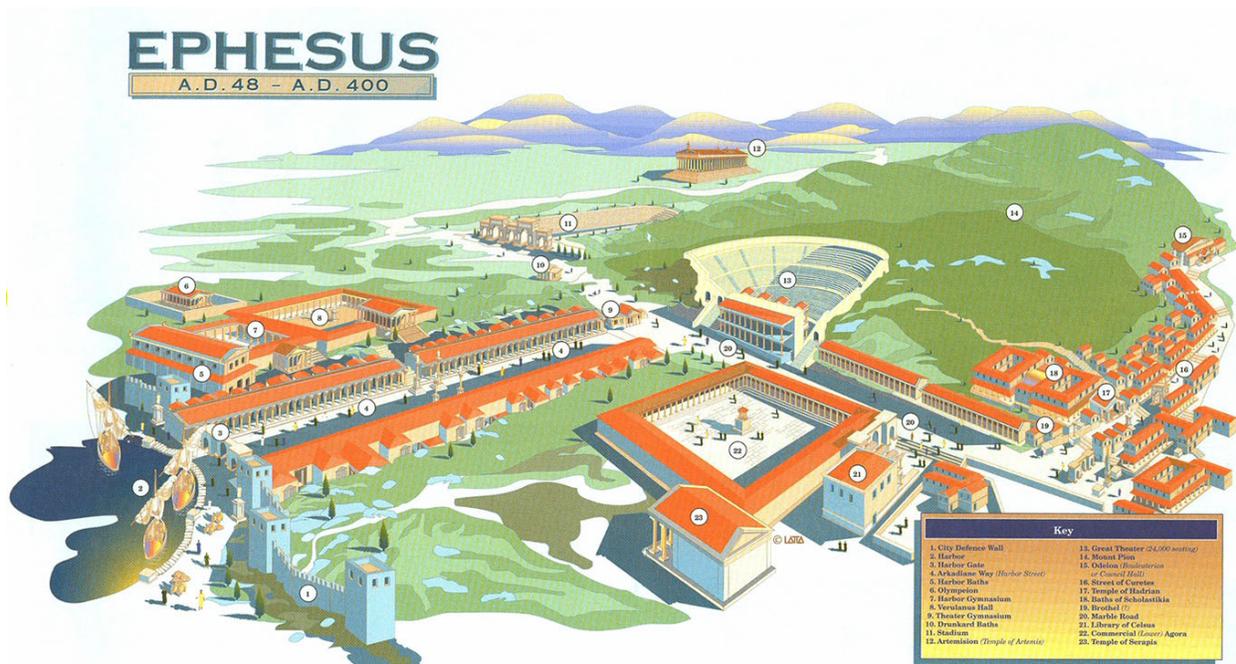


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- From there he journeyed to Jerusalem where he was arrested by the Jews and turned over to the Romans.
- He was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years (Acts 21:15–26:32). Around A.D. 57–59
- He was sent to Rome where he was imprisoned for another two years (Acts 27:1–28:31). About 60–62

Background of Ephesus:



Reconstruction of the Artemision, the great temple of Artemis (Roman Diana) at Ephesus in ancient Asia Minor (modern Turkey) which was begun in 360 B.C. to honor the ancient many-breasted mother goddess of the Anatolian region. The cult was adopted by the conquering Alexander the Great of Greece and renamed Artemis (Roman Diana). The temple was completed by the Greeks and was recorded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—four times larger than the Parthenon at Athens.

- Large contingency of Artemis worship (monotheistic worship was crazy!)
- Forceful faction of Imperial (Emperor) worship (to stay in Rome's good graces?). They were 'awarded' with the privilege of building an actual Imperial Temple. [end of first century] This figured into John's prophecy in **Revelation ???**
- 4th or 5th largest cities of its time: Rome and Athens were the other two?
- Port City.
- Hub of north/south and east/west traffic (perfectly placed).



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- Collection point for shipments heading west to Greece and Rome.
- Greatly influenced by the Roman Imperial economy and the practices needed to sustain it.
- Ephesus existed in what is now the westernmost part of Turkey
- Great aqueduct system: The city was well supplied with water, with significant amounts being carried in by aqueducts . Water was collected in cisterns and distributed throughout the city through clay pipes both to public fountains and private residences.
- Paul would return to make Ephesus his home and base of operations for two or three years (AD 53–55), during which time he no doubt became familiar with every yard of the public spaces of this city (Acts 19:1–20:1). He invested a great deal of himself in the evangelization of this city, which was one of the principal cities of the Roman province of Asia, in what is now the westernmost part of Turkey. From this city, members of his team took the gospel to other cities in the province.
- The Corinthian correspondence and the visits of Paul and his emissaries to Corinth during that period were undertaken from Ephesus
- Timothy is remembered to have exercised some important follow-up work in Ephesus, perhaps at some point in Paul’s later ministry (1 Tim 1:2).
- Ephesus may also have served as a hub for the Christians most directly nurtured by the Johannine literature of the New Testament.
- Tradition associates the apostle John with Ephesus. Lived there with Mary, Jesus’ mom.

Location of Ephesus:

- The Ephesus known to Paul was located near the mouth of the Cayster River (the Küçük Menderes River)
- On the shore of a harbor on the Aegean Sea,
- Stretching into the valley and up the slopes between Mt. Pion and Mt. Coressus.
- A natural harbor, which had to be periodically dredged because of the silting caused by the Cayster River, made Ephesus a major node for shipping in trade between east and west (Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.24). The effects of the constant silting can be dramatically seen from the fact that the ruins of Roman Ephesus now sit three full miles (4.8 km) inland from the Aegean shore.
- Founded by Lysimachus, a successor to a part of the kingdom of Alexander the Great(8th CenturyBC)
- Perimeter six mile wall.
- North-South Hwy – ran east as far as India.
- Eastern road would connect all the way to Babylonia.
- 200,00 population
- Many immigrants.
- Infant mortality: 33% in the 1st year, 50% by the 5th.



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- Jewish Populace: There is, however, ample literary evidence for the same, particularly in Josephus' *Antiquities*. Josephus documents the exemption from military service, first of the Jews in Ephesus who were Roman citizens (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.228) and then, from 43 BC on, all Jews in Asia (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.225–227).

Background on Paul: PAUL'S JOURNEY

- Paul penned the letter to the Ephesians while in prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20).
- Paul was imprisoned **in Caesarea** (Ac 24:22) around A.D. 57–59

Acts 24:22-27 Paul Kept in Custody

²² But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." ²³ Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs. ²⁴ After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you." ²⁶ At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. ²⁷ When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

Acts 27 Paul Sails for Rome. **[What the Centurion Saw]**

²⁷ And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. ² And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. ³ The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. ⁴ And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. ⁵ And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷ We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. ⁸ Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. ⁹ Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, ¹⁰ saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." ¹¹ **But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. [He saw a prisoner]** ¹² And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

The Storm at Sea

¹³ Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. ¹⁴ But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. ¹⁵ And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶ Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. ¹⁷ After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. ¹⁸ Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. ¹⁹ And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, **all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.**

²¹ **Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²² Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among**



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you, but only of the ship. ²³ *For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship,* ²⁴ *and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’* ²⁵ *So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.* ²⁶ *But we must run aground on some island.”*

²⁷ *When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land.* ²⁸ *So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms.* ²⁹ *And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.* ³⁰ *And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow,* ³¹ *Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.”* ³² *Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go. [They now began listening to Paul]*

³³ *As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing.”* ³⁴ *Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.”* ³⁵ *And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.* ³⁶ *Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves.* ³⁷ *(We were in all 276 persons in the ship.)* ³⁸ *And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.*

The Shipwreck

³⁹ *Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore.* ⁴⁰ *So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach.* ⁴¹ *But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf.* ⁴² *The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape.* ⁴³ *But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan.*

[Now the Centurion seen a Man with God's call on his life.]

He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, ⁴⁴ *and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.*

- **On to Rome** (Ac 28:30) in about 60–62

Acts 28

After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. ² *The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.* ³ *When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, **a viper** came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.* ⁴ *When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.”* ⁵ *He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.* ⁶ *They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.*

⁷ *Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.* ⁸ *It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him.* ⁹ *And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.* ¹⁰ *They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.*

[Centurion seen the power of God working through Paul]

Paul Arrives at Rome

¹¹ *After three months* we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. ¹² *Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.* ¹³ *And from there we made a circuit*



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and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. ¹⁴ There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days.

[Centurion seen the family of God at work.]

And so we came to Rome. ¹⁵ And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. [Centurion seen the family of God.]

¹⁶ And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

Paul in Rome

¹⁷ After three days he called together the **local leaders of the Jews**, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸ When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹ But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. ²⁰ For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.” ²¹ And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. ²² But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

²³ **When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. ²⁴ And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.**

[Centurion seen the division, the transition of the body of God.]

²⁵ And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ “Go to this people, and say,

“You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ [Isaiah 6:9-10]

²⁸ **Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”**

³⁰ **He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.**

[Did the Centurion believe, did he begin Walking with Paul in God's Amazing Grace?]

- Paul was receiving a firsthand experiencing with a hardcore Roman on this journey.
- He also wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians during the same imprisonment.
- Tradition suggests that Paul wrote the letter from Rome around 60–61, which would have transpired while Paul was under house arrest in guarded rental quarters (Ac 28:30).

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The Sending of The Letter:

Ephesians 6:21 ESV

So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the **beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord** will tell you everything.

Colossians 4:7-9 ESV

⁷Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

2 Timothy 4:12 ESV

Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. [TO RELIEVE TIMOTHY]

Titus 3:12 ESV

When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. [ONE OF WHICH WILL RELIEVE TITUS]

TYCHICUS (Τυχικός, *Tychikos*)

- Believer from Asia Minor (Acts 20:4)
- Ministered at the same time as and with Paul.
- In **Acts 20:1–6**, Tychicus is listed among a larger group of believers: Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy and Trophimus.
- **Thought to have traveled with both letters: Ephesians & Colossians at the same time**

2 Corinthians 8:18

¹⁸ *With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel.* {Believe this was Tychicus}

[Did the Centurion meet Tychicus?]

While Paul was imprisoned in Rome, **the need arose to respond to new religious philosophies influencing the Asia Minor area.**

The impetus to write the letters came to Paul from Epaphras, who informed him of **the threats to Christianity**

EPAPHRAS (Επαφρᾶς, *Ephras*)

Colossians 1:3-8

³ *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷just as **you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf** ⁸and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*

- A Christian from Colossae (One of Paul's converts?)
- Evangelist – taught the gospel to them and helped plant the church



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- Co-worker of Paul
- Epaphras set out from Ephesus ??? to evangelize Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. (Col 1:7–8; 4:12–13).
- Epaphras also seems to have played a continuing role in the growth of the Colossian church. Paul describes him as a “faithful minister of Christ” on behalf of the Colossians who brought news of their faith to Paul while he was in prison (Col 1:7–8; Phlm 1:23).
- Fellow prisoner

Philemon 1:23

²³ Epaphras, **my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus**, sends greetings to you,

²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

The situations Paul addressed in Ephesians came from Epaphras’ reports.

- Highly esteemed by Paul

Epaphras was obviously held in very high esteem by Paul, who referred to him as his “fellow servant” and as a “servant of Jesus Christ.” These were appellations that Paul used very rarely and only for his most honored companions (another being **Timothy**). In his letter to the Colossians Paul praised the work of Epaphras in the three cities. Although the name Epaphras is considered to be a familiar form of **Epaphroditus**, they are undoubtedly two different individuals (the name was a common one in both forms).¹

What did Epaphras report?

We can guess it included concerns from these themes contained in Ephesians:

UNITY:

Ephesians 2:12-14 One in Christ

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹² **remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.** ¹³ **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** ¹⁴ **For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility** ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^[d] but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^[e] the Spirit.

¹ Losch, R. R. (2008). In *All the People in the Bible: An A–Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture* (p. 107). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



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LOVE:

This oneness was to be **demonstrated by their love one for another**. Paul used the noun or verb form of love (*agape*) **19 times (about one-sixth of the total uses in all the Pauline letters)**.

- Ephesians begins with love

Ephesians 1:4–6

⁴ even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, ⁶ to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.

- Ends with love

Ephesians 6:23–24

²³ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

PAUL HAS A HABIT OF ADDRESSING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM (Unity&Love) and he also includes:

REDEMPTION 1:7 (Salvation, Restoration)

DIVINE INTENTION for the human race 1:3-14 (God's plan for us)

GRACE 1:2 (God's favor that we never can earn)

PREDESTINATION 1:4-5

RECONCILIATION 2:1-21

UNION WITH CHRIST 2:1-21

If these are Paul's answers.....

WHAT PROBLEMS WOULD EXIST FOR THESE TO BE THE ANSWERS?

HOW can we accomplish this?

The new body, the church, has been endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to live out their new lives (1:3–2:10) BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Vs 1:13 **Sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit. WHO is our guarantee of our inheritance.

Ephesians 2:10b

*⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

2:18

¹⁸ For through him we both **have access in one Spirit to the Father.**



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Central to the message of Ephesians is the **re-creation of the human family according to God's original intention for it.** [GENEALOGY MESSAGE]

The new creation destroys the misguided view that God accepts the Jew and rejects the Gentile. Paul says the distinction was abolished at Christ's sacrificial death. **Thus no more hindrance remains to reuniting all humanity as the people of God, with** Christ as the head (1:22–23).

and put into practice the new standards (4:1–6:9). **In sum, we can say that the overall emphasis of Ephesians is on the unity of the church in Christ, through the power of the Spirit.**

Ephesians 1:1-2

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus[not in all translations], and are faithful[saints who are also faithful] in Christ Jesus:*

²*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians: The Crown of all Paul's writings

NOTES:

Revelation 2:1-7

To the Church in Ephesus

² *"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

² *"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'*

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The Social and Geographical World of Ephesus

Acts 18:19-21, 24; 19:1-41; 20:16-17; Ephesians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:3; Revelation 1:11; 2:1



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DAVID A. DESILVA

Key Points

- Ephesus was a major commercial port city and an important node on the north-south and east-west road system, and thus a strategic hub for the immediate and ongoing work of a missionary/church planter like Paul and his team.
- The worship of Artemis and the city's identity and pride were intertwined from the founding of Ephesus, making devotion to Artemis a natural rallying point against an invasive monotheistic cult.
- Ephesus enthusiastically and devoutly supported the Roman imperial cult, with a marked upsurge toward the end of the first century as it was awarded its first provincial imperial temple. This is the climate and situation to which John's Revelation would appear to respond most directly for Ephesian Christians.
- The commercial structures and activity of Ephesus, particularly as a collection point for shipments heading west to Greece and, most especially, Rome, is another important point of connection with Revelation's critique of the Roman imperial economy and the practices that sustain it.

Ephesus in the Biblical Story

Few cities in the Mediterranean were more important in the story of the emerging church than Ephesus.

- Shortly after Paul had completed his work of church planting in Corinth (probably in AD 52), he traveled with Aquila and Prisca to Ephesus, stopping only long enough to get them settled there as a kind of advance guard for his future mission in the area (Acts 18:19–21).
- Apollos would encounter Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and be instructed by them in the gospel (18:24–26) before moving on to become a missionary and itinerant teacher in the circle of Pauline churches (see, e.g., Acts 18:27–19:1; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6; 16:12; Tit 3:13).
- Paul would return to make Ephesus his home and base of operations for two or three years (AD 53–55), during which time he no doubt became familiar with every yard of the public spaces of this city (Acts 19:1–20:1). He invested a great deal of himself in the evangelization of this city, which was one of the principal cities of the Roman province of Asia, in what is now the westernmost part of Turkey. From this city, members of his team took the gospel to other cities in the province. Ephapras, for example, set out from here to evangelize Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea, and also brought back word to Paul about these mission churches when his guidance was needed (Col 1:7–8; 4:12–13). The Corinthian correspondence and the visits of Paul and his emissaries to Corinth during that period were undertaken from Ephesus. Timothy is remembered to have exercised some important follow-up work in Ephesus, perhaps at some point in Paul's later ministry (1 Tim 1:2).
- Ephesus may also have served as a hub for the Christians most directly nurtured by the Johannine literature of the New Testament. Tradition associates the apostle John with Ephesus, as well as John the Elder (the author of 1–3 John). Christians in Ephesus were explicitly included among the congregations addressed by the visionary author of Revelation (Rev 1:11), not only in the oracle of the glorified Christ spoken to them specifically (Rev 2:1–7) but by Revelation as a whole, which spoke a poignant word to Christians in a city so supportive of the Roman imperial cult and Roman economy.

Roman Ephesus: Geography and Demographics

- The Ephesus known to Paul was located near the mouth of the Cayster River (the Küçük Menderes River) on the shore of a harbor on the Aegean Sea, stretching into the valley between Mt. Pion (Panayır Dağ) and Mt. Coressus (Bülbül Dağ) and up the lower slopes of both hills. The natural harbor, which had to be periodically dredged because of the silting caused by the Cayster River, made Ephesus a major node for shipping in trade between east and west (Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.24). **The effects of the constant silting can be dramatically seen from the fact that the ruins of Roman Ephesus now sit three full miles (4.8 km) inland from the Aegean shore.**

The location of Roman Ephesus is the result of a decision made three centuries before Paul by Lysimachus, one of the successors to a part of the kingdom of Alexander the Great. A settlement existed in the Homeric period (ca. eighth century BC) on the north side of the base of Mount Pion. During the Classical period, the settlement had



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relocated to an area about a mile (1.6 km) to the northeast, between the base of a third hill (the Ayasoluk) and the famous Temple of Artemis (see below). Lysimachus chose the city's final location to make of Ephesus a major port city and fortified it with a perimeter wall of about six miles (9.7 km) in circumference. Ephesus also came to be a node on a highway running north-south through Roman Asia, and also the westernmost point on a series of highways that led east as far as India (Strabo, *Geography* 14.2.29; Herodotus, *Histories* 5.53–54).

- Estimates of the population in the early Roman period generally fall around two hundred thousand people, making Ephesus the fourth or fifth largest city in the empire. Immigration was a huge factor in the growth of the city. Infant mortality was about 33 percent during the first year, 50 percent by the fifth year; the maintenance of the population suggests a steady flow of immigrants.⁹

There is no significant archaeological evidence for the presence of Jewish community in Ephesus beyond a handful of inscriptions and other artifacts bearing common, Jewish iconic decorations (menorahs, shofar, lulav, etrog). There is, however, ample literary evidence for the same, particularly in Josephus' *Antiquities*. Josephus documents the exemption from military service, first of the Jews in Ephesus who were Roman citizens (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.228) and then, from 43 BC on, all Jews in Asia (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.225–227).

Ephesus in the Time of Paul

After leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus to get established, Paul retraced his steps to Jerusalem, Antioch, and finally Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:22–23).

When he finally returned to Ephesus, he would have entered through the Magnesian Gate, the major opening in the fortification walls on the southeast side of the city.

- The road through here connected Ephesus with Magnesia on the Meander about fifteen miles (24 km) to the east and thence to an ancient road that led all the way into Babylonia.

A short walk would have brought him into the civic forum, the center of the city's government. Here he would have seen a largely open courtyard of about 525 by 190 feet (160 × 58 m) surrounded by columned porches, the most magnificent of which would have been the Basilica Stoa, constructed around 11 BC by Sextus Pollio. This two-story, three-aisled portico was 50 feet (15.25 m) wide, stretching the entire length of the civic forum on its north side. Its covered area, supported by sixty-seven Ionic columns, would have been a popular place for businessmen and city politicians to meet and conduct business out of the sun or rain. The Stoa was dedicated "to Artemis of the Ephesians, Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of a god, Tiberius Caesar, son of Augustus, and to the Ephesian people" with larger-than-life statues of Augustus and his wife, Livia in an antechamber on its easternmost side.

- The city was well supplied with water, with significant amounts being carried in by aqueducts (one of which was also constructed as a gift to the city by Sextus Pollio). Water was collected in cisterns, one major such node being located on the south side of the civic forum, and distributed throughout the city through clay pipes both to public fountains and private residences.

Several public buildings dominated the civic forum of Paul's day, three of which stood on the north side of the Basilica Stoa. First, the Prytaneion (in the northwest corner of the forum) was the site of the city's sacred [hearth](#)—the symbolic fire kept perpetually burning. As a symbol of the city's hospitality, it would have been the place where state dinners were held and foreign dignitaries entertained, but it also remained a place for the worship of several traditional Greek gods and goddesses. Inscriptions on the reerected pillars record the names of the priests—the *Curetai*—who served both in this building and in the Ortygian mysteries of Artemis (Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.20). A small temple of Artemis, the patron goddess of the city, stood next to the Prytaneion. By the turn of the era, part of this temple had been rededicated also to the worship of Julius Caesar. It consisted of a courtyard of about 108 by 95 feet (33 × 29 m) surrounded by



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colonnades on three of its sides; on the fourth side, a series of seven steps led up to the twin shrines. East of these stands an odeon, a small theater suited for musical performances and poetical recitations. The current structure dates from the second century and also served as the meeting place for the civic council. As excavations have not been undertaken beneath this structure, it is not known whether it was built over an older structure that served as a council hall in Paul's time.

The vast courtyard of the civic forum also became a kind of sacred precinct for a freestanding temple in its midst—a temple dedicated to Augustus and the goddess Roma. **The worship of the Roman emperors** had become an important expression of loyalty and gratitude to the chief patron of the world on the part of the citizens of Ephesus—as indeed for the whole province of Asia, whose cities vied for what they considered the privilege of constructing such temples to Roma (the divinized personification of the city of Rome itself) and to members of the imperial family. This temple, sporting single rows of six columns front and back and ten columns on its sides, had a footprint of about fifty by seventy-two feet (15.25 × 22 m).

Paul would have left the civic forum by a single, columned street beginning in its northwest corner and leading eventually to the commercial center of Ephesus. Archaeologists have named this street “Curetes Street” because it begins at the Prytaneion where the *curetai* carried out their duties. In antiquity it appears to have been known as the *Embolos*, the “Wedge,” perhaps because it cut diagonally across the city's grid pattern. **The street was lined with shops built into recesses behind the colonnades. It is possible that Aquila and Prisca had secured one of these spaces in which to ply their trade, though other sites were more likely.** The street was also lined with statues bearing inscriptions honoring public benefactors of the city (and thus, incidentally, bearing witness to the cultural importance of honoring them as such). Grander honorary monuments, such as a memorial built to Caius Memmius, a grandson of the dictator Sulla, and a monumental tomb for Sextus Pollio were also to be found on the upper half of this street (the latter being built beyond and below the west end of Pollio's Basilica Stoa).

At the base of Curetes Street stand two blocks of town houses, the second of which sits today under a protective Kevlar roof and has undergone significant restoration, giving visitors a glimpse into the colorfully decorated interior spaces of ancient homes approaching the quality of preservation of homes in Pompeii. The size of these dwellings, the elaborate decorations that adorn them in the way of frescoes and mosaics (e.g., frescoes of the nine muses, a mosaic of Neptune and his bride Amphitrite riding a dolphin), **and the provisions for indoor plumbing and even something approaching central heating show these to be the houses of the rich and powerful citizens of Ephesus.** This second block appears to contain six or perhaps seven individual units, most originally enjoying a second story (given the presence of bases of staircases). **Two of these individual units measure about four thousand and seven thousand square feet (371.6–650.3 m²)—lavishly spacious even by modern standards, and all the more so by ancient standards.** Paul seems to have made a point of bearing witness to members of this class in the various cities in which he sought to plant churches, since securing such patrons whose homes would be large enough to serve as meeting places for the congregation was essential to the movement's long-term success.



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More tomb monuments were to be found at the base of Curetes Street. Just in front of the second block of apartments once sat the Tomb of Arsinoë, a half-sister of Cleopatra VII who was murdered by Marc Antony's soldiers in 42 BC to advance Cleopatra's interests in Egypt. Arsinoë had sought asylum in the Artemision after Caesar was assassinated and was dragged thence and killed. A monument also stood there to honor Androclus, the legendary founder of Ephesus (see Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 7.2.6–9; Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.3).

Adjacent to a bath complex that likely postdates Paul's visit, and thus probably also postdating Paul's time in Ephesus, there is an excellent example of an **ancient latrine across Curetes Street from the Terrace Houses. Modern visitors are always surprised at the lack of privacy and personal space that the ancients required for such functions.**

Less expensive blocks of multistoried apartments, or *insulae*, climbed Mount Pion on the other side of Curetes Street. One of the narrow side streets leading up Mount Pion led to a large complex overlooking the great theater (see below). This might have been the home and (unofficial) administrative center for the governor of the province of Asia (the civic forum serving as the official locus for public administrative business).

Curetes Street opens at its base into a public square that also affords one point of access to the commercial center of Ephesus—the *Tetragonos agora*, or the "Square Market". The agora could be entered here from its southeast corner through a magnificent gate built by Mazaesus and Mithridates, two freedmen (that is, former slaves) of the house of Augustus, in honor of their former master and perpetual patron Augustus, his wife Livia, and Marcus Agrippa (at the time, Augustus' heir apparent). The magnitude of the structure bears witness to the wealth that could be amassed by imperial freedmen during this period.

The **agora** itself doubled in size during the reign of Augustus to the dimensions of 370 square feet (34.4 m²). There were sixty or so permanent workshops and stalls, built from stone, surrounding the inside perimeter on three sides. Columned porches on all four sides would have provided an ideal venue for buying, selling, or open-air preaching. These porticoes were impressive two-story structures with stairs at the corners giving access to the upper floor. A side street running north from Curetes Street alongside the agora and past the great theater also gave access to the upper story of these porticoes through a basilica built during the early years of Nero's reign. The vast open courtyard would, of course, have also been filled with vendors' carts and tents. This would have been the likeliest place among those so far excavated for Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul to have set up shop for their long stay in Ephesus. Statues of public benefactors, including members of the imperial household, graced the complex.

From the commercial agora one could find one's way to the harbor by two paths: one through a gate in the west side of the agora that opened onto a street leading west to the harbor, another through a gate on the north side that led eventually to a broad thoroughfare running between the great theater and the harbor. This street was thirty-six feet (11 m) wide and a third of a mile (483 m) long. It led past storehouses and more venues for vendors and merchants to conduct their business or inspect cargoes and eventually to the harbor itself, which, in Paul's day, was one of the busiest seaports of the Roman Empire. As such, it was also carefully regulated. A massive inscription was found on a slab standing taller than a human being that details the customs regulations of the harbor as well as penalties for smuggling and other infractions. This was a major node in the flow of goods from the East to Rome.



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Many of the cargoes listed in Rev 18:12–13 could be found arriving in Ephesus from the East for further transportation west, including slaves for the city’s slave markets, attested from inscriptions in the Square Market and from regulations concerning slave trafficking on the customs inscription. **There were obvious advantages and incentives for merchants and shipowners to favor putting themselves in Rome’s service. An inscription in Ephesus reads: “no one is liable to pay tax for goods carried in service to the people of Rome, nor for goods conveyed for religious purposes.”** The emperor **Claudius provided insurance for ships dedicated to delivering grain to Rome, should they be lost at sea, a major incentive in a risky industry.** An inscription above the entrance to the somewhat pretentious tomb of one Flavius Zeuxis, a merchantman sea captain from Hierapolis, boasts of his making seventy-two successful trips around the southern coast of Greece to Italy (most likely using Ephesus as his port) in trade with Rome. The Ephesian harbor indeed afforded a distinctive view into the Roman imperial economy that directed a disproportionate percentage of the world’s goods—both luxury items and staples—toward “the great city” (Rev 17:18; see esp. also 18:11–20).

At the east end of “Harbor Street” stands **the great theater of Ephesus.** Originally constructed during the Hellenistic period, it was expanded to its present dimensions over the course of a century beginning in about AD 40. It is possible that the city council used this as a meeting place prior to the construction of the odeon. **The theater could have accommodated a vast crowd of between twenty-one thousand and twenty-five thousand spectators.** Readers of Acts will immediately connect this site with the riot that probably convinced Paul that it might be time to move on from Ephesus (Acts 19:21–41).

The episode is instructive from a number of angles: the economic interests that were inseparable from questions of religion and conversion; the ease with which civic pride could be connected with the worship of a particular (endangered) deity and harnessed against a foreign cult; and Paul’s team’s apparent degree of effectiveness in this city.

The street that ran north from Curetes Street past the great theater continued further north to a **gymnasium** complex that began just diagonally across from the theater and, eventually, to a **vast stadium.** During the Hellenistic period, this had been a simple earthen stadium like that at Olympia in Greece; it was reconfigured in stone with typical stadium seating over arched passageways during Nero’s reign. The stadium was home to the **Ephesia**, an annual series of games drawing competitors from throughout the province and involving both athletic and artistic competitions, including music and dance. Another principal egress from the city’s fortifications could be found behind the stadium—the Coressian Gate, from which the Great Artemision would have been clearly visible in the distance.

Ephesus and Artemis

As in every major city in the Roman world, the residents of Ephesus were also devoted to many deities. For example, the **worship of Cybele** is attested in a shrine that stands on the far north side of the Panayir Dağ and evidence of private devotion to **Aphrodite, Dionysus, and Isis** was discovered in houses throughout the city. Ephesus was known throughout the region, however, as a city especially devoted to **Artemis.** While Artemis was worshiped in many of the cities of Asia Minor, **Ephesus was home to her greatest temple.** Today, very little remains of the Artemision, since throughout the Medieval and Ottoman periods the perfectly cut stones of the derelict



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temple were quarried for new buildings. **In Paul's time, however, the Great Temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (indeed, the crowning marvel among them according to Antipater of Sidon in *Greek Anthology* 9.58)** and a major destination for pilgrims and tourists from across the Mediterranean. Its footprint was 220 by 425 feet (67 × 129.5 m), more than four times that of the Parthenon in Athens. Double rows of columns 6.5 feet (2 m) in diameter and 65 feet (19.8 m) high stood around the temple's perimeter, supporting its roof. These were arranged in rows of 8 on the shorter and 20 on the longer sides, to a total of 127 columns (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 36.21.95–97). A grand altar stood about 125 feet (38 m) in front of the temple itself. A shrine to Augustus may also have been incorporated into this famous Artemision in the early imperial period.³⁵

In addition to being the most prominent religious site in the area, the temple also served major commercial functions: It was an important lending agency, using the proceeds from the lands owned by “the goddess” as capital to be lent out at interest, as well as a sacred depository for major sums of money (Caesar, *Civil Wars* 3.33, 105; Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* 31.54–55; Aelius Aristides, *Orationes* 23.24). Its activities were supported by an immense staff of priest, functionaries, and temple slaves.

The Artemision sat less than a mile's (1.6 km) walk from the Coressian Gate (the northern gate of Roman Ephesus) and about a mile and a quarter (2 km) from the Magnesian Gate (the city's eastern gate). A calendar of regular sacred processions featuring Artemis connected the city with her temple. One itinerary brought the sacred images of Artemis and other cult images and paraphernalia from the temple to the Magnesian Gate, through the civic agora, down Curetes Street, past the Square Market and theater, and out the Coressian Gate, to return thence to the Artemision. Over 250 participants might be involved in the typical sacred procession, carrying the images on platforms, singing, and carrying out various offerings at sacred locations throughout the city.

Although Greek-styled images of Artemis were found in private homes in Ephesus, this was not her public face in Asia Minor. Cult statues and representations of cult images, for example on coins of Ephesus, show her as a mother goddess, flanked by two deer, her chest covered with symbols of fertility. It is debated whether these symbols should be understood as breasts (so Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 23.5), eggs, or even the testicles of bulls. It is clear, however, that the more ancient worship of the Mother Goddess of the region was joined at an early stage with the worship of Artemis. She wears a peculiar headdress on which several buildings are represented—perhaps representing the city of Ephesus itself, with Artemis as its personal patron and protector.

Many inscriptions found throughout Ephesus bear witness to the importance of Artemis (as well as the emperor) for the life of the city. One typical inscription begins with a dedication to both “Ephesian Artemis” and Augustus. **Artemis was so closely linked with the prestige and well-being of the city that the city laid particular claim to her** as, in some sense, their own. The inscription goes on to honor an Ephesian noble named Vibius Gaius as φίλαρτεμις και φιλοσεβαστος (*philartemis kai philosebastos*), a “friend of Artemis and friend of Augustus.” What gives Vibius honor in this city is his piety toward—and perhaps his financial support of—the civic cults of Artemis and the emperor. A great many coins minted in Ephesus bear witness to the city's pride in and identification with their patron goddess.

In such a city, Paul was destined to run into trouble. His proclamation of one and only one God threatened the city's very identity and its claim to fame, not to mention the livelihood of the concessioners like Demetrius whose trade depended on the reputation and worship of Artemis of the Ephesians. Demetrius, a maker of souvenir silver replicas of the goddess Artemis, rallied thousands of the city's citizens to gather in the theater to protest Paul's activity. As one sits in its stands, one can almost still hear the echoes of the chant they took up for two whole hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” (Acts 19:34).

Civic Developments under Domitian



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The church Paul and his team planted would continue to grow in this city in the decades following Paul's departure. The church in Ephesus emerges again prominently in Revelation as one of the seven congregations addressed by that text. By then, the point of conflict between the Christian movement and city had moved away from Artemis and more fully toward the worship of the emperors, with the latter becoming a new focus for civic pride and identity.

For most of the first century, Pergamum and not Ephesus was the epicenter of imperial cult in the province of Asia. Augustus and the Roman Senate granted the Pergamenes the honor of building the first temple to the emperor Augustus and the goddess Roma (the deified personification of the city of Rome) in 29 BC, making it the center for the worship of Augustus in the province. Smyrna would be selected from among twelve cities in Asia (including Ephesus and Pergamum) to host the provincial cult of Augustus' successor Tiberius, along with Tiberius' mother Livia and the Roman Senate, in AD 26. Such grants conferred significant honor upon a city above its peers and also became a visible symbol of the emperor's favor toward the city, even as the city proposing (and building and maintaining and operating!) the imperial temple expressed its exuberant gratitude and loyalty toward the imperial family.

Though the provincial capital of Asia Minor, Ephesus would not win the honor of housing the leading temple in the provincial cult of a particular emperor until the late first century AD in connection with the city's bid to undertake a massive temple in honor of the emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96). The new temple would be inaugurated in AD 89/90. It is, in fact, unclear whether the temple was to be dedicated to all three emperors of the Flavian family (Domitian together with his deceased and divinized father, Vespasian, and older brother, Titus, both of whom had reigned prior to Domitian) or to Domitian alone. It is clear, however, that the temple was at least rededicated to Vespasian after Domitian's death, for the latter had fallen so significantly out of favor with the Senate as to have suffered the condemnation of his memory—the opposite of the apotheosis that his father and brother had enjoyed upon their passing. The temple would be referred to as “Asia's Shared Temple of the Augusti in Ephesus” in inscriptions (particularly inscriptions made by representatives of other cities who thus claimed a share in the temple even while conceding its placement “in Ephesus”).

The city fathers selected a prominent plateau on the west side of the civic forum. Engineers artificially extended this plateau to an area of 280 by 210 feet (85.3 × 64 m) by means of a vaulted and arched brickwork substructure to accommodate the grandiose plans for this temple and its surrounding courts and porticoes. A three-story facade faced worshipers arriving from the main approach off Curetes Street. Doric columns stood on the bottom level, Ionic on the middle, and Corinthian on the third—a tribute to the Flavian Amphitheater in Rome, a major construction project begun under Vespasian and completed by Titus. Across the second and third levels, every column bore the life-sized, carved relief of a god, some known from Greek and Roman religion, some local like Attis and Cybele, some imported from the far reaches of the empire like Isis of Egypt, as if the pantheons of every nation had assembled here to bless those who approached to worship at the temple of the living god Domitian. Worshipers would ascend by means of a grand staircase to the temple courtyard.

Excavations on the top of the plateau have uncovered parts of the original temple itself, including the raised 80 by 110 foot (24.4 × 33.5 m) platform on which the temple sat, approached on all sides by four steps, and the temple's foundations. The temple had single rows of eight columns front and back and thirteen columns on the longer sides. It was surrounded by a broad courtyard with columned porticoes on three sides. The Ephesus Museum now houses part of the altar that originally stood before the temple, ornately engraved with sacrificial scenes (such as a garlanded bull, bound to the altar and ready to be sacrificed) and scenes commemorating Domitian's military victories. A colossal statue of the emperor, estimated to have stood more than twenty feet (6 m) in height, was



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housed within the temple, presenting him as the larger-than-life and greater-than-human figure that an emperor was believed and experienced to be. The head and left forearm are all that remain. The identity of the emperor represented by this statue is admittedly a matter of dispute, some favoring Domitian, others favoring his elder brother Titus.

Another massive construction (possibly an expansion) project beside the harbor to the north of Harbor Street involved an expansive bath and gymnasium complex in preparation for inauguration of Olympic-style games in honor of Domitian. These facilities—covering an area of over seventy thousand square yards (58,529 m²) in all, making it one of the largest such complexes of its time—were completed in AD 92/93.

For its extraordinary devotion to the emperor Domitian, Ephesus finally gained the honor of being named νεωκόρος (*neōkoros*) or “temple warden” of a provincial imperial cult in the Roman Province of Asia. The city took evident pride in having achieved this honor, for a great number of public inscriptions would henceforth speak of “the council and people of the temple-warden (*Neōkoros*) city of the Ephesians.” Imperial cult was now at the very heart of civic identity and pride. This was no less true for **Pergamum** whose leaders, after Ephesus had also won this title that Pergamum had enjoyed for over a century, began to refer to their city in inscriptions no longer simply as “the temple-warden city of the Pergamenes,” but rather as “the *first-to-be-named*-temple-warden city of the Pergamenes.” They responded further by building the monumental temple to Trajan (ruled AD 98–117) on the very brow of their acropolis, for which they were awarded a second neocorate and began to speak of their city as “Twice-named-temple-warden.” The cities of Roman Asia Minor boasted of their imperial temples and honors like modern cities might boast about their professional sports teams. Ephesus would press this rivalry even further, however, building a monumental temple to the emperor Hadrian (ruled AD 117–138), identified with “Olympian Zeus,” near the harbor. For this, Ephesus was also awarded a second neocorate, adding to the reputation and luster of the city. After this point, however, the Pergamenes began to refer to themselves as “the *first-to-be-named-twice*-temple-warden,” thus maintaining their edge over their rival city.

Modern readers of Revelation may have difficulty understanding the unpopularity—indeed the resentment and danger—that Christians faced if they took an open stance *against* the worship of the emperor in cities like Ephesus and Pergamum. It may be even more difficult to understand the local enthusiasm for the cults of men-turned-gods. But when we begin to understand how civic identity, civic pride, civic standing in the region, and civic well-being were all tied to the imperial cult, we may begin to appreciate more fully what a threat the Christian gospel was with its call to “fear God and give Him glory” (Rev 14:7)—him, and no other. Nevertheless, John would call the Christians in Ephesus, who would hear John’s references to a beast and its organized cult as a trenchant critique of the Roman emperor and the worship offered to him throughout the province and legitimating Roman imperialism, to consistent and uncompromising witness to their neighbors that there was indeed only one God, and that the pretensions of Rome and its emperors was utterly demonic.

See Also

- Atlas:
 - [From Corinth to Ephesus—Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila](#)
 - [From Ephesus to Antioch via Jerusalem—Paul](#)
- Factbook:
 - Ephesus, Paul
 - Artemis
 - Roman Imperial Cult
 - Church at Ephesus
- Factbook event:
 - Paul makes a brief stop in Ephesus
 - Paul in Ephesus
- Interactive:
 - Ephesus Theater Before & After
 - Temple of Artemis Before & After
 - Ephesus Odeon Before & After
- Video:
 - [Artemis of the Ephesians](#)
 - [Imperial Cult in Ephesus](#)
 - [Ephesus](#)
 - [Ephesus—Commerce and Community](#)
 - [Ephesus Walkthrough](#)
 - [Seeing Things on Patmos—The Island of the Apocalypse](#)



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EPHESIANS, LETTER TO THE (Ē phē' shěnz) While it is not the longest of the Pauline Epistles, Ephesians is the one that **best sets out the basic concepts of the Christian faith**.

Paul and the Ephesians Precise information on the introduction of Christianity to Ephesus is not available. From Acts 13:1–14:28 we know Christianity was introduced to the Asian peninsula early. Paul and Barnabas, during the first missionary journey about A.D. 45–48, established Christianity in Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Phrygia. The newly established religion moved inevitably westward to the coast and to the flourishing city of Ephesus, a city of multiple religions, gods, and goddesses.

At the close of his second missionary journey about A.D. 49–52, Paul left Achaia (Greece) taking Aquila and Priscilla with him. They stopped at Ephesus and surveyed the situation in that city where religions flourished. The Ephesians urged Paul to stay there, but he declined. Leaving Aquila and Priscilla and perhaps Timothy there to carry on the Christian witness (Acts 18:18–21), Paul sailed to Antioch. He returned to Ephesus during a third missionary journey and experienced the triumph over the challenge of Jewish religious leaders as well as that of the Greco-Roman religions represented in the worship of the Greek goddess Artemis (Roman name—Diana; Acts 19:24).

His ministry in Ephesus lasted three years (Acts 20:31). From there he journeyed to Jerusalem where he was arrested by the Jews and turned over to the Romans. He was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years (Acts 21:15–26:32). He was sent to Rome where he was imprisoned for another two years (Acts 27:1–28:31).

Interpreters are divided in opinion as to the time and place of the writing of Ephesians. These two imprisonments of Paul are the only ones which might bear on the question of where and when the Imprisonment Epistles were written. In all four of these epistles, Paul mentioned his imprisonment.

A related and much debated question is the year of Paul's writing each epistle and the place. To our knowledge only two places appear to be viable options—Caesarea and Rome. Majority

² deSilva, D. A. (2019). [The Social and Geographical World of Ephesus \(Acts 18:19–21, 24; 19:1–41; 20:16–17; Ephesians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:3; Revelation 1:11; 2:1\)](#). In B. J. Beitzel, J. Parks, & D. Mangum (Eds.), *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts through Revelation* (pp. 537–553). Lexham Press.



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opinion through Christian history has favored Rome. A much smaller minority of interpreters has argued for Caesarea.

A third opinion has grown out of Col. 4:16 in which Paul urged the church at Colossae to exchange letters with the church at neighboring Laodicea so both might get the benefit of both letters. This opinion, which was never widely held, took the position that Paul was writing from an imprisonment in Ephesus and that the “Laodicean” letter was what we have as “Ephesians.”

Careful review of this very extensive and complex issue leaves the subjective opinion that all four Prison Epistles were written by Paul during his imprisonment in Rome about A.D. 61–62. Also subjective is the opinion that they were written in this order: Ephesians A.D. 61; Colossians A.D. 61; Philemon A.D. 61; Philippians A.D. 62.

Introduction to the Epistle Paul’s motive for writing this letter was the challenge that Christianity faced in confrontation with other religions and philosophies of the day. Paul was convinced that the religion he proclaimed was the only way of redemption from sin and sonship to God.

The challenge was the struggle for human minds as they sought the “good life.” Even in Judaism, the cradle in which it was born, Christianity faced that aggressive encounter.

Paul opposed a Judaism he considered to have become a religion of human attainment, doing the works of the law as a means of being right with God. He offered instead Christianity as a religion of divine provision, salvation by faith in God’s providing what humans could never attain.

That distinction was also what brought Christianity into conflict with Greek philosophy and with the Greco-Roman nature religions. The Christian view is that the “good life” comes by faith, not by intellectual processes, speculations, and rules of conduct in the integration of personality.

Analysis of the Epistle: Theology and Ethics Following the pattern of all of his epistles, Paul introduced himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God—not by human will, not even by his own will, but God’s will. That was the driving force in his life.

The expression “at Ephesus” is not in the oldest manuscripts of Ephesians, but it is in many of the best ones. Its absence has led to speculation that in writing the epistle Paul left a blank space and that he meant the epistle to be a circular one to go to several churches. As the epistle was read in the churches, the public reader would insert the name of that church; such as, at Laodicea, at Hierapolis, at Colossae, and so forth. Indeed one manuscript of about the middle of the second century had “at Laodicea” in that place.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:2 HCSB) is in all of Paul’s epistles. It is always in that order, grace and peace. Grace is the work of the Father by which salvation from sin comes. Peace is the condition of the believer’s heart after grace has done its work. They are in that order because there can be no peace in the heart until grace has done its work.

Following a frequently used pattern in Paul’s epistles, two basic themes are developed. First there is a major section on some theological theme. Second there follows a major section in ethics growing out of the theological theme. In the NT theology and ethics are bound together; they are never to be separated.

In his theological part (1:3–3:21) Paul centered attention on the plan and propagation of redemption. He began with a literary pattern of a poem or song to praise God for what He has done in providing salvation for sinful humanity. The provision of redemption is presented as the work of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A refrain “to the praise of His glorious grace” repeats itself after each section, each with a slight variation.



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Paul turned to thanksgiving to show the blessings of redemption (1:15–2:10). He wanted his readers to know Christ better, the Christ who enables believers to have the incomparable power that resurrected Christ and that now rules in this age and the one to come. This power can come to persons who were dead in sin but are saved by grace, being raised up with Christ to participate in His rule but also to live out of grace in the good works God has planned for His people to do.

Paul turned to the language of imperative to explain the propagation of redemption (2:11–3:21). A people without hope, separated from the people of the covenant have been brought to salvation through the blood of Christ. Thus unity of all races is accomplished through Him. In the cross He brought peace and provided access to God through the one Holy Spirit. All are joined together in Christ's church built on the foundation of the apostles and serving as the residence of God the Spirit. This good news is a mystery, a mystery God calls people to share with other people through His grace and a mystery which allows all people to approach God in confidence and freedom.

Paul turned to prayer to conclude this section and reveal the goal of redemption (3:14–21). His prayer was that Christ may dwell in the believers who will be rooted in love and can grasp the marvelous greatness of that love.

In his ethical part (4:1–6:24) Paul looked at the application of redemption to the church, to personal life, and to domestic life. Ethical imperatives dominate the section. He sought unity in the Spirit—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. Within the unity he celebrated the diversity of the individuals within the church, a diversity stemming from the differing gifts Christ gives. The use of the gifts within the church leads to maturity for the church and its members. Maturity involves growing in Christ, in His love, each doing the work Christ gives and not seeking to do the work assigned another.

This has consequences for personal life, calling for a complete transformation from the lifestyles of unbelievers. Without faith the individual is devoted to selfish lust and earthly dissipation. The believer becomes like God in holiness, purity, and righteousness. A central element of this is human speech, speaking the truth and saying that which helps build up others. Anger and malice must turn to love, compassion, and forgiveness. Walking in the light means pleasing God and showing the sinfulness of evil deeds. This is the wise path avoiding spirits that make one drunk but turning to the one Spirit who leads to praise and worship. This changes one's role at home. Submission to one another becomes the key, a submission motivated by loyalty to Christ and love to the marital partner. That love follows the example of Christ's love for His church. Parents expect honor from children while training children in the Lord's way of love. Similarly, masters and servants respect and help one another.

To complete his letter, Paul called his readers to put on God's armor to avoid Satan's temptations. This will lead to a life of prayer for self and for other servants of God. This will lead to concern for and encouragement from other Christians. As usual, Paul concluded his letter with a benediction, praying for peace, love, faith, and grace for his beloved readers.

Outline

- I. Salutation: The apostle greets the church (1:1–2).
- II. Theology: The plan of redemption leads to the propagation of redemption (1:3–3:21)
 - A. The plan of redemption (1:3–14)



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1. The work of the Father: He has blessed and chosen us in Christ, predestining us for sonship in Him (1:3–6).
2. The work of the Son: He brings redemption and forgiveness from sin through His blood (1:7–12).
3. The work of the Spirit: He seals us as God’s cherished possession (1:13–14).
- B. The blessings of redemption (1:15–2:10)
 1. A clear insight into the nature of redemption (1:15–19)
 2. A full insight into the nature of Christ (1:20–23)
 3. A transition from spiritual death to spiritual life (2:1–9)
 4. A life of good works wrought out in Christ (2:10)
- C. The propagation of redemption (2:11–3:21)
 1. Redemption is for all without regard to race (2:11–13).
 2. Redemption makes all people one in Christ (2:14–22).
 3. Redemption is to be revealed to people through other people (3:1–13).
 4. Redemption has a goal: revelation of the nature of God’s love through Christ (3:14–21).
- III. Ethics: Redemption is applied in church life, personal life, and domestic life (4:1–6:24).
 - A. The application of redemption in church life (4:1–16)
 1. The Holy Spirit produces unity (4:1–6).
 2. Christ provides a diversity of gifts (4:7–11).
 3. The Spirit’s unity and Christ’s gifts result in maturity (4:12–16).
 - B. The application of redemption in personal life (4:17–5:21)
 1. Desires and practices of old life are ended (4:17–32).
 2. In the new way of life the redeemed learn to walk in love (5:1–5).
 3. In the new way of life the redeemed learn to walk in light (5:6–14).
 4. In the new way of life the redeemed learn to walk in wisdom (5:15–21).
 - C. The application of redemption in domestic life (5:22–6:9)
 1. Mutual duties of husbands and wives to each other (5:22–33)
 2. Mutual duties of parents and children to each other (6:1–4)
 3. Mutual duties of masters and servants to each other (6:5–9)
- IV. Conclusion: Prepare for the spiritual conflict of life (6:10–24).
 - A. Know God is your Ally and Satan your enemy (6:10–12).
 - B. Put on the armor God supplies (6:13–17).
 - C. Pray for boldness for Christian leaders (6:18–20).
 - D. Communicate with and encourage one another (6:21–22).
 - E. Live under God’s benediction of peace, love, faith, and grace (6:23–24)

Ray Summers

EPHESUS (Ĕph’ ə sŭs) One of the largest and most impressive cities in the ancient world, a political, religious, and commercial center in Asia Minor. Associated with the ministries of Paul, Timothy, and the Apostle John, the city played a significant role in the spread of early Christianity. Ephesus and its inhabitants are mentioned more than 20 times in the NT.

Location The ancient city of Ephesus, located in western Asia Minor at the mouth of the Cayster River, was an important seaport. Situated between the Maeander River to the south and the



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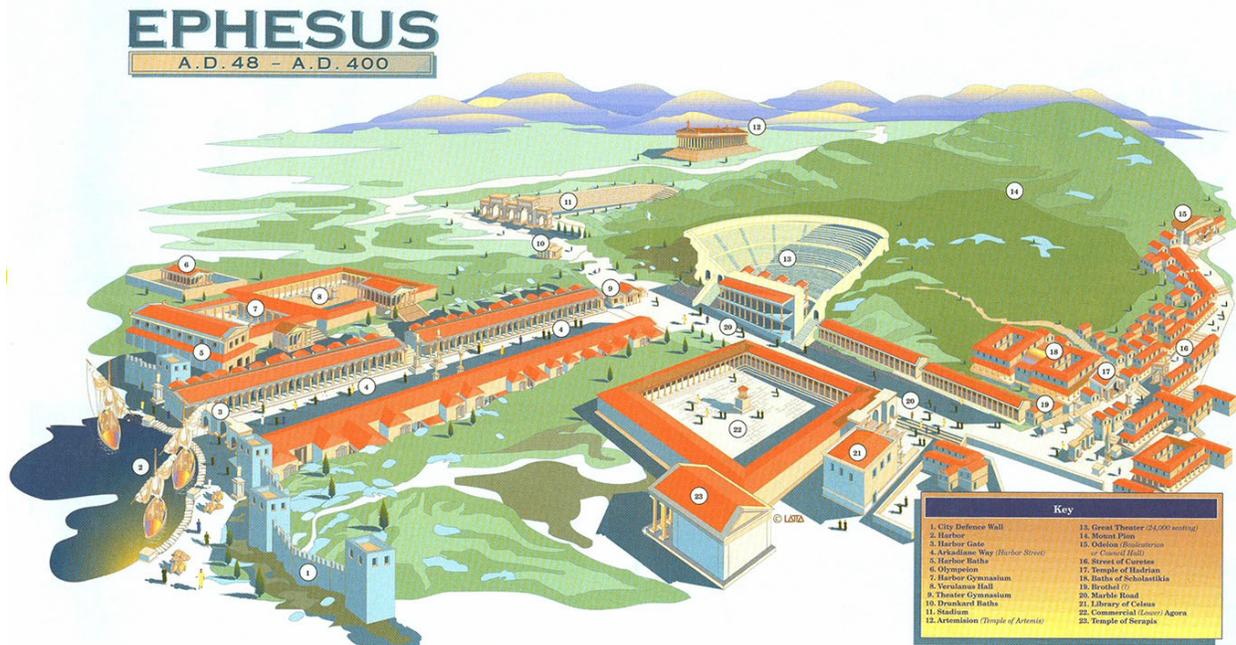
Hermus River to the north, Ephesus had excellent access to both river valleys that allowed it to flourish as a commercial center. Due to the accumulation of silt deposited by the river, the present site of the city is approximately five to six miles inland.

Historical Background The earliest inhabitants of Ephesus were a group of peoples called Leleges and Carians who were driven out around 1000 B.C. by Ionian Greek settlers led by Androclus of Athens. The new inhabitants of Ephesus assimilated the native religion of the area, the worship of a goddess of fertility whom they identified with the Greek goddess Artemis, the virgin huntress. (Later the Romans identified Artemis with their goddess Diana.)

Around 560 B.C. Croesus of Lydia conquered Ephesus and most of western Asia Minor. Under Croesus' rule the city was moved farther south and a magnificent temple, the Artemision, was constructed for the worship of Artemis. In 547 B.C., following the defeat of Croesus by Cyrus of Persia, Ephesus came under Persian control. Disaster struck the city in 356 when fire destroyed the Artemision.

Alexander the Great, who was reportedly born on the same day as the Artemision fire, took over the area in 334 B.C. His offer to finance the ongoing reconstruction of the temple was diplomatically declined. The rebuilt temple, completed about 250 B.C., became known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Lysimachus, one of Alexander's generals, ruled over Ephesus from about 301 to 281 B.C., when he was killed by Seleucus I. Under Lysimachus the city was moved again, this time to higher ground to escape the danger of flooding. City walls were built; a new harbor was constructed; and new streets were laid out. After the death of Lysimachus, Ephesus fell under the control of the Seleucids until their defeat by the Romans in 189 B.C. Rome gave the city to the king of Pergamum as a reward for his military assistance. In 133 B.C., at the death of the last Pergamum ruler, the city came under direct Roman control.



Reconstruction of the Artemision, the great temple of Artemis (Roman Diana) at Ephesus in ancient Asia Minor (modern Turkey) which was begun in 360 B.C. to honor the ancient many-breasted mother goddess of the Anatolian region. The cult was adopted by the conquering Alexander the Great of Greece and renamed Artemis (Roman Diana). The temple was completed by the Greeks and was recorded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—four times larger than the Parthenon at Athens.

Under the Romans, Ephesus thrived, reaching the pinnacle of its greatness during the first and second centuries of the Christian era. At the time of Paul, Ephesus was probably the fourth largest city in the world, with a population estimated at 250,000. During the reign of the emperor Hadrian, Ephesus was designated the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The grandeur of the ancient city is evident in the remains uncovered by archaeologists, including the ruins of the Artemision, the civic agora, the temple of Domitian, gymnasiums, public baths, a theater with seating for 24,000, a library, and the commercial agora, as well as several streets and private residences. Also discovered were the head and forearm of a colossal statue of the emperor Domitian. Today the Turkish town of Seljuk occupies the site of ancient Ephesus. See *Asia Minor, Cities of; Ephesians, Letter to the; Revelation of Jesus Christ; Timothy, First Letter to*.

Mitchell G. Reddish³

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³ Summers, R. (2003). [Ephesians, Letter to The](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 491–499). Holman Bible Publishers.



Paul's Missionary Work in the Provinces of Asia and Illyricum

Acts 19:1-41; 20:1-38; 21:1-16

ECKHARD J. SCHNABEL

Key Points

- The eleventh phase of Paul's missionary work took place in the province of Asia, focused on Ephesus.
- The mission in Asia allowed Paul to implement his plans to preach the gospel in western Asia Minor.
- The twelfth phase of Paul's mission was a brief spell in the province of Illyria.
- The mission in Latin-speaking Illyricum provided a new church-planting opportunity.

Paul's Visit to the Churches in Judea, Syria, Cilicia, and Southern Galatia

After his mission in Macedonia and Achaia, Paul had accompanied Aquila and Priscilla to Ephesus on the way to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18–19). When Ephesian Jews invited him to spend time in the city (Acts 18:20–21), Paul continued his journey to Syria: he traveled to Caesarea and Jerusalem in Roman Judea (Acts 18:22) and then continued to Antioch in Syria (Acts 18:22) where he spent “some time” (Acts 18:23). Luke does not tell us the purpose of Paul's visit in Caesarea, Jerusalem, and Antioch in AD 51/52; it is plausible to assume that he gave a report of his church visits in Syria, Cilicia, and Galatia communicating the decisions of the Apostles' Council (AD 48/49), and of his missionary work in Macedonia and Achaia (AD 49–51).

Paul set out from Antioch (Syria), presumably in the spring of AD 52, “and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples” (Acts 18:23). Luke's travel notice is extremely compressed. Since Paul aimed for Ephesus, the notice implies that Paul took the land route: as at the beginning of the ninth phase of his missionary work, Paul traveled through northern Syria (via Planatoi, Alexandria) and eastern Cilicia (Epiphaneia, Anazarbos, Adana, Tarsus), visiting the churches he had established during the fourth and fifth phase of his missionary work, as well as southern Galatia visiting the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. The land route from Antioch in Syria to Antioch in Galatia amounted to a distance of 438 miles (705 km), which required twenty-eight days or five weeks of travel.

Paul's Travel from Pisidian Antioch to Ephesus (Asia)

The phrase “the region [χώρα, *chōra*] of Galatia and Phrygia” in the travel notice of Acts 18:23 is most plausibly understood as (1) a reference to Lycaonian and Phrygian regions that had been incorporated in the Roman province of Galatia—Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium in Lycaonian Galatia,



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and Antioch in Phrygian Galatia (Pisidian Antioch), and (2) as well as a reference to Asian Phrygia, that is, those regions of Phrygia that had become part of the province of Asia and through which Paul traveled after his visit to the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Luke takes up Paul's travel to Ephesus in Acts 19:1: "Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus" (NIV). Which route did Paul take from Pisidian Antioch (in southern Galatia) to Ephesus (Asia)? The Greek phrase *ta anōterika merē* (τὰ ἀνωτερικὰ μέρη) and thus Paul's route from Pisidian Antioch via Apamea (modern Dinar) to Ephesus has been variously interpreted.

Possible Routes

Option 1. An inner route through Lydia: the expression in Acts 19:1 refers to the mountains of Asia and Phrygia with the headwaters of the Meander and Hermus Rivers, suggesting a route via Tavium in the eastern region of northern Galatia, Thyatira, and Sardis.

Option 2. An upper route through the northern regions of coastal Bithynia and the Mysian shore of the Propontis and the Aegean Sea, suggesting a route north to the Sea of Marmara.

Option 3. An upper route through the valleys of the Cayster and Hermus Rivers via Smyrna, with the suggestion that Paul might have wanted to visit the important cities of Philadelphia, Sardis, and Smyrna.

Option 4. An upper route toward the valleys of the Lycus and Meander Rivers, suggesting a route from Apamea to Laodicea, turning north toward Hierapolis, and Tripolis, then across the mountains into the Kogamus River Valley west to Philadelphia and Sardis, then south across the Tmolus Mountains into the valley of the Cayster River to Ephesus.

Option 5. An upper route through the Cayster Valley: Luke's "higher districts" refer to the region of the upper Meander and upper Cayster valleys, specifically to the "the traverse of the hill-road" that ran from Apamea to the Cayster Valley north of the Messogis Mountains.⁹ I have reconstructed this route as follows. Paul traveled from Pisidian Antioch west-southwest on the *Via Sebaste* to Apollonia (Mordiaion), west across the mountains and along the northern shore of Lake Aulutrene to Apameia; from there he traveled in the upper Meander Valley northwest to Homodena, Eumeneia (Fulvia), Sebaste, then south to Blaundos and into the valley of the Kogamos River; traveling west, Paul would have reached Philadelphia (modern Alaşehir) and Sardis (modern Sart); from Sardis, Paul would have turned south, crossing the Tmolus Mountains into the Cayster Valley, traveling via Hypaipa, Larisa¹² and Thyaira to Ephesus. This route is two hundred miles (322 km) long.

Option 6. A southern route from Apamea via Laodicea to the valley of the Meander River, suggesting a route from Apamea southwest via Anaua (Sanaos) north of Lake Sanaos, then west to Colossae and Laodicea ad Lycum in the valley of the Lycus River, a sidearm of the upper Meander River; from Laodicea Paul would have continued west, passing through Karoura, Antioch on the Meander, Tralles, and Magnesia before reaching Ephesus. This route is 173 miles (279 km) long.

Analysis



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Option 6 is the shorter and much more convenient route. This route requires that the phrase *ta anōterika merē* (τὰ ἀνωτερικὰ μέρη) is interpreted in terms of “interior regions” (ESV, NIV, NRSV), and the verb *katerchomai* (κατέρχομαι, “come down”) in Acts 19:1 is either connected with Pisidian Antioch and Apamea, which are at higher altitudes, or taken in a more general sense.¹⁷ If Paul wanted to get from Pisidian Antioch to Ephesus as quickly as possible, this would have been the logical route to take.

Option 5 interprets both terms more consistently as indicating regions of higher altitude (RSV: “upper country”). The argument that has sometimes been advanced that Paul traveled through the highlands in order to avoid the scorching heat of the region around Ephesus is hardly plausible: Paul wanted to proclaim the gospel in Ephesus, which would not have made it possible to escape the heat of the Mediterranean coast. A more plausible reason for the longer route via the Cayster Valley might have been a recurrence of malaria that Paul had suffered from earlier and which would have thought to be ameliorated in higher altitudes.

Paul’s Missionary Work in Ephesus and in the Province of Asia

Paul most probably arrived in Ephesus in the late summer of AD 52. Luke reports for Paul’s mission in Ephesus nine incidents: (1) Paul arrives in Ephesus and encounters followers of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1–7). (2) Paul proclaims the gospel in the synagogue (Acts 19:8–9). (3) He relocates his preaching and teaching activity from the synagogue to the lecture hall of Tyrannus where Paul was active for two years, a base of operation from which he reached the entire province of Asia (Acts 19:9–10). (4) Miracles that happened in Paul’s ministry (Acts 19:11–12). (5) The fiasco involving Jewish exorcists who are beaten up by the evil spirits they attempted to drive out has an enormous impact on the population (Acts 19:13–16). (6) More Jews and Greeks are converted, and the church grows as they confess their sins and burn magic texts (Acts 19:17–20). (7) Paul decides to visit Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and Rome (Acts 19:21–22). (8) A riot instigated by the silversmiths grips the citizens who assemble in the theater, a dangerous situation that the city clerk is able to defuse (Acts 19:23–41). (9) Paul departs from Ephesus and travels to Macedonia (20:1).

As Acts 19:10 and passages in Paul’s letters to the Corinthian Christians indicate, further events took place during Paul’s mission in Ephesus:

- Mission to other cities in the province of Asia—Acts 19:10
- Epaphras establishes churches in Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea—Col 1:7; 4:12
- Apollos arrives from Corinth; Paul writes a letter to Corinth—1 Cor 16:12; 5:9
- Chloe’s people arrive from Corinth; Paul sends Timothy to Corinth—1 Cor 1:11; 4:17
- Paul sends 1 Corinthians to Corinth—1 Cor 16:8
- Paul plans to travel to Jerusalem via Macedonia and Corinth—1 Cor 16:3–6; Acts 19:21
- Paul organizes a collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem—1 Cor 16:1; Rom 15:26–27
- Timothy returns from Corinth, then is sent to Macedonia—Acts 19:22
- Paul visits Corinth to address problems in the church 2 Cor 13:2
- Paul sends Titus to Corinth with “severe letter”—2 Cor 2:4, 13
- Riot in Ephesus—Acts 19:23–41
- Paul suffers serious affliction in the province of Asia—2 Cor 1:8



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The city of Ephesus (near modern Selçuk) was one of the most important cities of the ancient world, with a population of probably two hundred thousand. When the province of Asia was established as the first Roman province in Asia Minor in 133 BC, Ephesus was granted the status of a free city (*civitas libera atque foederata*). Julius Caesar, who visited Ephesus in 48 BC, was honored with a monument whose inscription acclaims him as “the god descending from Ares and Aphrodite and the savior of human life.” In 30–29 BC Augustus made Ephesus the seat of the provincial governor. The political status of the city and its harbor, the largest in Asia Minor, contributed to the economic growth of Ephesus. The theater seated twenty-four thousand spectators. The worship of Artemis Ephesia was the dominant cult of the city. Jews are attested in Ephesus since the Seleucid period; some received citizenship rights from king Antiochus III (261–246 BC). Josephus quotes an edict of the Roman consul Lucius Lentulus, issued in 49 BC, that granted the Jews of Ephesus exemption from military service.

The fact that Paul stayed in Ephesus for over two years—from late summer AD 52 to the spring of AD 55—and that the entire province of Asia “heard the word of the Lord” while Paul was based in Ephesus suggests that Paul traveled to other cities preaching and establishing churches, as he had done during his previous missionary work. It appears that during Paul’s mission in Ephesus, Epaphras established the churches in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. We know from Rev 1:11; 2:1–3:22, that churches existed, besides Ephesus and Laodicea, in Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia. The report in Acts 20:15, 17–38 suggests that a church existed in Miletus. A church in Troas is attested in Acts 20:6–12; 2 Cor 2:12–13; 2 Tim 4:13. Since Luke does not indicate whether Paul traveled to other cities in the province of Asia, and since Paul does not provide such details either, it is impossible to specify travel routes for Paul’s wider ministry in the province.

Paul’s Mission in the Province of Illyricum

Paul left Ephesus in the spring of AD 55 and traveled through Macedonia, encouraging the believers (Acts 20:1–2), presumably in the churches he had established in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, before he arrived “in Greece” where he stayed for three months (Acts 20:2–3), most plausibly a very compacted reference to the fact that Paul stayed in Corinth over the winter of AD 55/56—writing his letter to the believers in the city of Rome during this period—traveling to Jerusalem in the early spring of AD 56.

Luke provides no details concerning Paul’s travel route. Paul may have left Ephesus by ship, heading straight for the Macedonian port of Neapolis (283 miles [455 km]) or he may have taken the coastal road, visiting churches north of Ephesus, for example, Smyrna, Pergamum, Adramyttium, and Troas, a journey of 193 miles (310 km), before crossing the Aegean Sea to Neapolis (137 miles [220 km]). The latter is more likely, given the statement in 2 Cor 2:12 (written not long after Paul left Ephesus) that Paul preached the gospel in Troas. After arriving in Neapolis (Macedonia), he would have traveled to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (156 miles [251 km]).⁴

⁴ Schnabel, E. J. (2019). [Paul’s Missionary Work in the Provinces of Asia and Illyricum \(Acts 19:1–41; 20:1–38; 21:1–16\)](#). In B. J. Beitzel, J. Parks, & D. Mangum (Eds.), *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts through Revelation* (pp. 385–391). Lexham Press.



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predestination. The conviction that God has in his sovereign grace from all eternity “elected,” or predestined, a body of people for salvation. Some recent theologians have emphasized the theme that Jesus is primarily God’s elect, chosen from before the foundation of the world, and that the predestination of the church must be understood in relation to being “in” or “one” with Christ. Some Calvinists hold to a “double predestination” in which God predestines those who are not part of the elect for damnation. *See also* foreknowledge, divine; free will; providence; sovereignty.⁵

Daily Life in New Testament Times

Daily life was hardly uniform among the various residents of the early Roman Empire. An urban craftsman in Ephesus experienced life much differently from a tenant farmer in rural Galilee or a Roman magistrate in Philippi. Men and women also generally undertook distinct roles and responsibilities. The most profound differences in quality of life, however, existed between elites and nonelites.

Occupations

The Roman Empire was a preindustrial, agrarian society with an underdeveloped economy. Elites controlled much of the landed wealth, and they typically viewed manual labor of any kind as incompatible with their social status, instead exalting leisure as the goal of the good life. The labor force consisted of nonelites (slave and free), the majority of whom worked in agriculture (grain, olives, and grapes) and lived at a subsistence level. Although we have evidence for the continued existence of small landholders during the imperial era, nonelites more often worked as tenants on large landed estates owned by the urban-dwelling aristocracy. The pastoral images of the Gospels (esp. the parables portraying agricultural day-laborers and tenant farmers; Matt. 13:24–30; 20:1–16; Mark 12:1–8) reflect these realities.

Other occupations included fishing, leather-working, pottery-making, and various crafts. Jesus is identified as a *tehton*, a term used to refer to craftspersons who do hand fabrication, usually of some complete product such as a plow or a table. In no case should these artisan occupations be viewed in terms of the modern “free enterprise” system. The fishing industry around the Sea of Galilee, for example, was controlled by local ruling elites who sold fishing rights to brokers (“tax collectors”), who in turn contracted with local families who fished the lake. Given the location of his toll office in Capernaum, Matthew may have served as just such a broker of Galilean fishing rights on behalf of the ruling tetrarch Antipas (Matt. 9:9).

Education

⁵ Evans, C. S. (2002). [*Pocket dictionary of apologetics & philosophy of religion*](#) (pp. 95–96). InterVarsity Press.



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Week 1: Welcome to Ephesus

Education in ancient Mediterranean society finds its origins in classical Greece and, except for the addition of Latin to the general curriculum during the Roman era, schooling remained remarkably uniform throughout the Hellenistic world. The threefold division of primary, secondary, and higher education will be familiar to modern readers. Less familiar will be the centrality of physical training and the general restriction of higher education to elite males.

Primary schooling was widespread and included children of both genders and nearly every social class. Beginning at age seven, children attended the reading school and the *palaestra*, which focused, respectively, on elementary reading/writing skills and physical training. Memories of primary education preserved in ancient literature paint a rather dark picture of brutality at the hands of underpaid and socially despised instructors. Elites generally trained their children at home under the care of slave tutors.

Secondary education led students on to grammar school, where they studied the classics and, to a lesser extent, mathematics, music, and astronomy. Homer, Euripides, Menander, and Demosthenes were favored Greek authors; Virgil, Terence, and Cicero represented the Latins. Studies ranged from the careful copying of texts to discussions of a work's contribution to the moral life. The culmination of secondary education found students producing an original composition, typically in Attic Greek, on an assigned theme.

Higher education was the province of elites, who typically attended the *ephebeia*, an exclusive male institution associated with the municipal *gymnasium*, where future aristocrats spent a year or two in a program that was primarily physical and only secondarily academic in nature. The gymnasium contained a stadium and sand-covered courtyard for physical exercises, along with baths and a lecture hall. Activities included wrestling and related contact sports, as well as running, long-jumping, and discus throwing. Completion of the course of study at the *ephebeia* qualified young males for full social and political acceptance into the small circle of powerful elites found in each of the cities of the Greco-Roman world. More serious academic pursuits at the third and final level of training included the study of rhetoric or, for a smaller percentage of the population, philosophy.

Many Jews also received a standard Hellenistic education, as surviving evidence from the Jewish community at Alexandria clearly indicates. Other Jews attempted to insulate their children from pagan influence by focusing on Scripture and Jewish tradition rather than the Greek classics. Formal Hebrew schools, patterned after the three-stage model, appear well after the establishment of the Hellenistic schools. Late evidence for Jewish primary schools (early 2nd century A.D.) suggests that much early training was done, according to the biblical mandate, in the home (Deut. 4:9; 6:7). Jewish boys clearly learned to read well enough to participate in synagogue readings and exposition (Luke 4:16-20). Debate in later rabbinical works suggests that at least some girls also studied Torah.

Housing and Life in the Ancient City

Ancient cities were smaller than the large urban centers familiar today. Rome, with ca. one million residents, was by far the largest, and most municipalities were probably less than a tenth this size. Population density, however, guaranteed that urban



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dwellers in the cities in which early Christianity took root endured uncomfortable crowding at home (200 persons per acre).

Extensive open space and attractive public facilities offered some consolation for crowded living conditions, and life was lived mostly in public—on the streets and sidewalks, in the marketplaces, and in public squares. Privacy was rare, and few events in the neighborhood would escape the attention of local residents. Persons of common ethnic origin (a number of ancient cities had a Jewish quarter), or families who shared the same trade (e.g., the “Portico of the Perfumers” in Rome), would live and work in close proximity. While Paul was in Corinth he had no difficulty locating a couple who shared both his Jewish ethnicity and his craft (Acts 18:1-3).



One of several pools at the gymnasium in Sardis (www.HolyLandPhotos.org)

Urban housing always presented a challenge, and nonelites generally occupied small rented apartments carved out of poorly designed buildings. These dwellings were typically cramped, cold, and dark.

The elites who owned these apartment buildings generally lived elsewhere. Large Roman villas, familiar from excavations at Pompeii, housed a number of the empire’s wealthier persons. These larger homes, along with their extended households, became an important component in the social life of the early Christians. The few elites who joined the Christian movement (“not many,” writes Paul, but some; 1 Cor. 1:26) served as patrons of their local communities. The whole church in Corinth, for example, enjoyed the hospitality of a certain Gaius (Rom. 16:23), a gathering that could hardly occur in a cramped urban apartment. Phoebe apparently played a similar role in the Greek city of Cenchreae (Rom. 16:1-2).

JOSEPH H. HELLERMAN⁶

⁶ Hellerman, J. H. (2011). [Daily Life in New Testament Times](#). In G. D. Fee & R. L. Hubbard Jr. (Eds.), *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (pp. 620–621). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



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	A.D.	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Death, resurrection of Christ (A.D. 33 [or 30]) [†]		■										
Paul's conversion (33/34*)			●									
Paul's first Jerusalem visit (36/37*)				●								
Paul's second Jerusalem visit (famine relief) (44–47*)					■							
Paul's first missionary journey (46–47)					●							
Paul's third Jerusalem visit (apostolic council) (48–49*)						●						
Paul's second missionary journey (48/49–51*)					■							
Paul's third journey (incl. 3 years in Ephesus) (52–57*)						■						
Epaphras converted in Ephesus, evangelizes Colossae (52–57*)						■						
Paul under house arrest in Rome (62*)									●			
Paul hears from Epaphras, writes to Colossian church (62*)									●			
Paul martyred in Rome (64–67*)									■			

* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; [†] see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810⁷

⁷ Crossway Bibles. (2008). [The ESV Study Bible](#) (p. 2291). Crossway Bibles.