

# INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

May 9, 1989

## I. Background to the church's founding.

- A. At the end of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul visited Ephesus briefly, Act.18:18-21.
- B. The city was strategically located and was the commercial center of Asia Minor.
- C. Ephesus was a religious center, famous for the temple of Diana (Roman name) or Artemis (Greek name); considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (see Act.19:35).
- D. The practice of magic and the local economy were tied to this temple.
- E. Paul remained in Ephesus for nearly three years on his third missionary journey (Sept.53 - May 56AD); the result was that the Word of God spread throughout Asia Minor, Act.18:23 - 20:1,31.
- F. Paul's ministry began to hurt the business of those who made their living from the sale of images and occult books; this led to a riot in the huge theater there.
- G. On the last leg of his third missionary journey, Paul met with the Ephesian elders one last time, Act.20:17-23.

## II. The time of writing.

- A. Paul wrote the "prison epistles" (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) during his first Roman imprisonment (Feb.60-Mar.62AD).
- B. All of these letters mention his imprisonment, Eph.3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil.1:7,13,14; Col.4:3,10,18; Philm.9,10,13,23, and fit well against the background of Act.28:16-31.
- C. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were evidently written about the same time, Eph.6:21,22 with Col.4:7-9. Philippians was written toward the very end of his imprisonment (62AD).

## III. The author of the book.

- A. Paul is clearly the author.
- B. No ancient scholar appears to have dissented with this view.
- C. Modern critics have to reject it against overwhelming internal and historical evidence.
- D. Though the letter may have been intended as a circular letter to other churches of Asia, there is little doubt that the writer had in mind the church that he founded in the great metropolis of Ephesus.
- E. Paul wrote this letter from prison in Rome at about the same time as Colossians and Philemon and sent it by the same coworker, Tychicus, Eph.6:21; Col.4:7-9.

## IV. The purpose and nature of the book.

- A. Apart from the salutation (Eph.1:1,2) and the personal notes and a greeting at the end (Eph.6:21-24), which give the document the form of a letter, Ephesians falls into two parts.
  1. The first half generally presents doctrine (there are no imperatives in the first three chapters).
  2. The second half is devoted primarily to exhortation respecting the Christian way of life (in chapters 4-6 there are some 35 directives for believers).
- B. The first half of the letter is designed to elevate the appreciation level of gentile Christians with respect to their new position in Christ in the present dispensation.
- C. The second half of the letter is designed to bring them to the place where they function according to that new position.
- D. Some of the features of this letter that stand out.
  1. The impersonal character of the letter is somewhat surprising in that Paul mentions no one by name (he addresses them only in generic terms despite the fact that he was with them for an extended period of time).
  2. Paul identifies no particular heresy (as he does in Galatians and Colossians) and he gives no hint of factions or immorality (as in Corinthians).
  3. There is a limited reference to the *parousia* (i.e., the coming of Christ) in the letter, Eph.1:14; 4:30, a feature that the letter has in common with Galatians, Gal.5:5 (for the

only reference).

4. The letter has been variously designated as: "the quintessence of Paulinism"; "the crown of Paulinism"; "a mosaic of Pauline materials"; "a rhapsody of the Christian salvation."

## V. The outline of Ephesians.

A. Salutation, Eph.1:1,2.

B. Part one: The new humanity, a divine creation, Eph.1:3 - 3:21.

1. Introductory *eulogia*, Eph.1:3-14.

a. Chosen by the Father, Eph.1:3-6.

b. Redeemed by the Son, Eph.1:7-12.

c. Sealed by the Spirit, Eph.1:13,14.

2. Introductory thanksgiving and intercessory prayer, Eph.1:15-23.

a. Thanks for their faith and love, Eph.1:15,16.

b. Prayer for spiritual enlightenment, Eph.1:17-23.

3. Position of the believer, Eph.2:1-3:13.

a. The believer's position individually, Eph.2:1-10.

1. Old condition: dead to God, Eph.2:1-3.

2. New condition: alive to God, Eph.2:4-10.

b. The believer's position corporately, Eph.2:11-3:13.

1. Reconciliation of Jews and gentiles, Eph.2:11-22.

2. Revelation of the mystery of the Church, Eph.3:1-13.

4. Prayer for total comprehension and doxology, Eph.3:14-21.

C. Part two: The new humanity in the present life, Eph.4:1-6:20.

1. Exhortation to unity, Eph.4:1-3.

2. Confession of faith, Eph.4:4-6.

3. Provision for growth, Eph.4:7-16.

4. Christian conduct, Eph.4:17-5:20.

a. Put off the old self and put on the new, Eph.4:17,18.

b. Negative and positive functions, Eph.4:18-5:21.

c. Mutual responsibilities in three relationships, Eph.5:22-6:9.

5. The believer in the Angelic Conflict, Eph.6:10-20.

a. The Christian armor, Eph.6:10-17.

b. The necessity of prayer, Eph.6:18-20.

6. Conclusion, Eph.6:21-24.

a. The arrival of Tychicus, Eph.6:21,22.

b. Final benediction, Eph.6:23,24.