

Small Group Discussion Outline



Introducing Ephesians

This is the first in a series of Bible Studies on Ephesians. In this study we will investigate some of the background to the writing of this letter and its recipients to better understand the significance of its contents.

This study is intended to paint a picture of the world in which Ephesians was written to enable us to better apply God's Word to our own lives in an accurate and relevant way as we move through this series.

AUTHOR



Read Ephesians 1:1



*Who wrote Ephesians?
Who was it written to?*

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Church in Ephesus. It is actually very likely that this letter was sent to a number of different churches in the Roman Province of Asia (modern day Turkey.)

OCCASION AND PLACE OF WRITING



Read: Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20



What was Paul's situation at the time of writing this letter?



Read: Colossians 4:3; 4:10; 4:18

We know from the book of Acts (Acts 21:26->28:31) that Paul was first arrested in AD57 and after a long journey eventually arrived in Rome around AD60. Here he was put under house arrest where he was free to write and to preach. It was during this time that he likely wrote Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians.

THE CITY OF EPHEBUS



Read: Acts 19:23-41



What sense do you get of the life and size of this city?

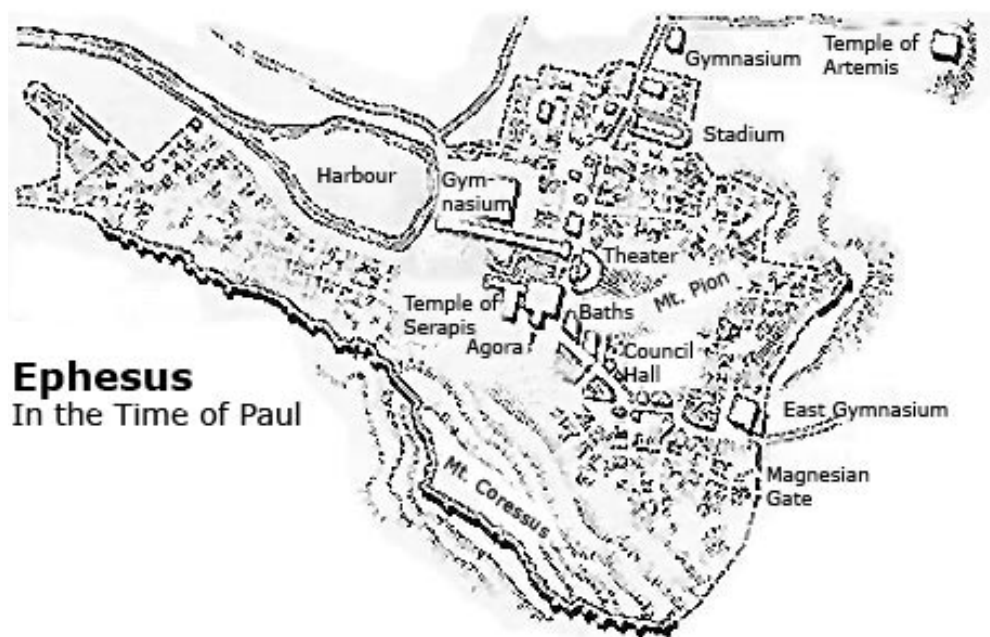
Ephesus was a leading city in that part of the world - the Romans gave it the title "the first and greatest metropolis of Asia." Its greatest non-Christian attractions were the pagan Temple of Diana, known as "Diana of the Ephesians," and its open theatre, capable of containing 25,000 spectators - then largest in the world; it is this theatre that is mentioned in Acts 19.

You may reproduce and distribute this outline by any means free of charge.

You may not charge for this material or claim it as your own work.

© Copyright 2005
Chris Woodham
WAIUKU ASSEMBLY OF GOD
All rights reserved
PO Box 196
Waiuku 1852
New Zealand

Paul first visited the city near the end of his Second Missionary Journey, about AD51, while returning from Greece to Syria (Acts 18:18-21). He at that time remained only briefly, as he was hurrying to be back at Jerusalem for Pentecost, but he left Priscilla and Aquila behind to carry on with the work of the Gospel. Paul returned to Ephesus on his Third Missionary Journey, arriving from an overland journey through Asia Minor.



This time he remained for about three years, gaining such popularity that “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word of The Lord.” (Acts 19:10)

THE MESSAGE OF EPHESIANS *(Notes quoted from the NIV Study Bible)*

Unlike several of the other letters Paul wrote, Ephesians does not address any particular error or heresy. Paul wrote to expand the horizons of his readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God’s eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church.



***Have you ever considered that God has plans for us as a Church as well as individuals?
What might this understanding say about the value God places on His Church?
In light of this, what must our view of the Church be?***

The letter opens with a sequence of statements about God’s blessings, which are interspersed with a remarkable variety of expressions drawing attention to God’s wisdom, forethought and purpose. Paul emphasizes that we have been saved, not only for our personal benefit, but also to bring praise and glory to God. The climax of God’s purpose, “when the times will have reached their fulfilment,” is to bring all things in the universe together under Christ (1:10). It is crucially important that Christians realize this.



***Why is this important for us to understand?
What happens when Christians lose focus of God’s purposes?***

FINAL THINGS

Ephesians is a very special book in the Bible as it is written about things that concern the Church as a whole rather than things which primarily are about us as individuals.

Throughout this series we will explore God’s awesome goals for His Church and learn to apply them to our situation in the local Church.

WAIUKU ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Ph: (09) 235 7341 **Mob:** (021) 187 1928 **Email:** waiukuag@wag.org.nz **Web:** www.wag.org.nz