

EPHESIANS

Introduction

Author. The author identifies himself as Paul in the letter (1:1; 3:1) and hints at the fact frequently (3:7, 13; 4:1; 6:19-20). Although some have doubted Paul's authorship because of the absence of personal greetings, it likely that the letter was intended to be a circular letter, intended for other churches besides Ephesus.

Date. The letter was likely written at the same time as the letter to Colossae, while Paul was in prison the first time at Rome, about 60 A. D.

Occasion. Paul's first contact with the city came at the end of his second missionary journey as he docked briefly at Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21). Because he was anxious to get on to Jerusalem for the feast he left Aquila and Priscilla there to minister in his place. While Paul was gone, Apollos came to Ephesus and was instructed in the claims of Christ by these two. Paul then returned for an extended stay on his third missionary journey. After ministering in the synagogue for a period of three months, Paul was eventually rejected (Acts 19:18, 19) and took up meeting in a school belonging to one Tyrannus for two years. His was an effective ministry in Ephesus as 1) the gospel reached out into all Asia (Acts 19:10, 26); 2) the worship of the goddess Diana began to feel the effects of the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 19:18-19); and 3) the magical arts practiced widely in the city suffered as well (Acts 19:18-19). Later, after Paul was released from prison, he revisited the city and left Timothy to oversee the work (1 Timothy 1:3).

It seems that Paul had just written his epistle to Colossae to correct the heresy in that church, and knew that the carrier would pass through Ephesus on the way to Colossae. Thus, Paul penned this letter, perhaps not because of an immediate crisis, but because the opportunity to send a letter was at hand and he had learned that a dangerous heresy had found root in the area. Thus, his purpose was to fortify the readers against possible errors and to expound on the unity which Jew and Gentiles now had in the body of Christ because of Calvary.

Message Statement. Ephesians does not address any particular error or heresy. Rather, Paul writes to expand the horizons of the readers so that they might understand the goals which God has for the Church. *God's purpose to bring all things together in Christ produces unity among believers.*

Argument

- | | | |
|----|--|--------|
| 1A | INTRODUCTION
Paul's introduction includes identification of both the writer and the readers and the customary greeting. | 1:1-2 |
| 1B | THE DIVINE PURPOSE: THE HEADSHIP AND GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST | 1:3-14 |

In customary fashion Paul expresses the theme of the epistle early in the book. Paul's basic focus is unfolding God's purpose of placing all things under the headship of Christ. As he states in 3:9-11 "*And he made known to us the mystery of his will . . . to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*"

- 1B The Means of the Purpose: Salvation 1:3-8
In order to bring all things under the headship of Christ it was necessary to redeem a people. Before the foundations of the world God's plan was to produce a holy people through the redemption of calvary.
- 2B The Goals of the Plan 1:9-14
The goals of the plan are basically twofold: the headship of Christ and the glory of Christ. The headship of Christ was a goal which was basically unknown before Paul's revelation (1:9-10). Inherent in the headship of Christ is his glorification. The salvation which he has secured for mankind and his headship are ultimately meant to be for the *praise of his glory* (1:12, 14).
- 1C PAUL'S PRAYER THAT CHRISTIANS MAY REALIZE GOD'S PURPOSE AND POWER 1:15-23
Paul's prayer begins with thanks and then quickly turns to requests. His first desire is that the Ephesians may come to know the person of God better. Then Paul prays for their understanding of various aspects of God's plan for them, their hope, their inheritance and the power which is now available to them. The prayer ends with an emphasis once again upon the headship of Christ over all things.
- 1D STEPS TOWARD THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE 2:1--3:21
Having explained God's purpose, Paul proceeds to describe the steps which He has taken to accomplish it. Paul deals with these issues because they have been unrevealed up to this point.
- 1B The Salvation of Individuals by Grace 2:1-10
In a classic passage on salvation, Paul covers the high points of depravity, grace and faith. God is clearly the focus of this portion.
- 2B The Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile Through the Cross 2:11-22
Not only has God saved Jew and Gentile but he has also reconciled them together in one body. Because of the work of the cross both groups have been reconciled to God and to each other so that they might be ". . . *built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit* (2:22).
- 3B The Revelation of this Unity 3:1-13
This unity was a mystery to generations before Paul. God used him to reveal specifically that ". . . *through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus*" (3:6). God's design in this unity was that ". . . *through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, . . .*" (3:10). Whereas in the Old Testament God revealed himself through Israel, now his glory and plan are made clear through bringing Jew and Gentile together in the Church.
- 4B Paul's Prayer for Christians to Have A Deeper Experience of God's Wisdom 3:14-21
With this new revelation Paul pauses once again to pray that the Ephesians may understand the love which God has for them and may be filled with Him. He closes the prayer with praise to God for his Son and his Church.
- 1E PRACTICAL WAYS TO FULFILL GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE CHURCH 4:1--6:20
While Paul's emphasis has been upon the position which the church has in the heavenly realms it is also true that the unity which believers share in Christ must be lived out on the earth. Accordingly Paul prescribes several avenues in which God's ultimate goals for the church may be carried out in daily living.
- 1B Unity in the Body 4:1-16
Paul's initial admonition of walking worthy of the calling which Christians have received (4:1) is no doubt a reference to the goal of manifesting the wisdom of God as discussed in chapter three (3:10, 21). That is, by living in unity under the headship of Christ, the church can testify to the wisdom and plan of God. The goal of unity is clearly described in the first six verses with such words as "*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit . . . one body and one spirit just as you were called to one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and father . . .*" (4:3-6).

The means by which this unity is accomplished seems to be through the preparation and edification of the

body by spiritually gifted leaders. As God gave gifts of the levites for edification of his people in the Old Testament so also now he gives spiritually gifted men to the Church.

- 2B Renewal of the Personal Life 4:17--5:20
 Personal sanctification is a major step in the church's ability to manifest the glory of God. Paul encourages a transformation in the personal life by putting off sinful practices and putting on godly practices (4:17-32). He then implores the Ephesians to be imitators of God (5:1-7) and encourages them to live as children of light rather than of darkness (5:8-20).
- 3B Deference in Personal Relationships 5:21--6:9
 As in his letter to Colossae Paul also admonishes proper deference in relations with other people. His concern is mutual submission and deference and he outlines three basic relationships: husbands and wives (5:22-33), parents and children (6:1-4), and masters and slaves (6:5-9). In each of these three areas the subordinate party is addressed first.
- 4B Strength in Spiritual Conflict 6:10-20
 Because God's intent is that his glory be demonstrated through the church not only to mortals but also to "*the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, . . .*" (3:10) it is essential that the Christian utilize and demonstrate the power of God in spiritual conflict. Paul's final advice concerns the importance of prayer not only for oneself but for all Christians. He includes himself in this request asking that he may be able to proclaim the gospel clearly that God's wisdom might be made manifest through his life.
- 1F CONCLUSION 6:21-24
 Paul mentions that the letter carrier, Tychicus, will inform the church of Paul's personal circumstances. Thus, the epistle is clearly a treatise with theological rather than personal purposes.

