

The Letter to the Ephesians 2018

Paul the Apostle is in prison awaiting trial in Rome before Nero when he writes this letter, as well as Philippians, Colossians and the personal letter to Philemon. Thus, we call these 4 letters the Prison Epistles. The date would be in the early 60's, as we believe Paul died about 63 AD in Rome.

The city of Ephesus was a strategic city in the ancient Roman world as it was the capital city of Asia, and was also a major port for trade. It was the center for those who practiced the cult worship of Diana (also known as Artemis). Her temple at Ephesus; was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. So this city of 250,000 people was a center for trade, politics, and religious activity.

The church at Ephesus was founded by Paul on his 3rd missionary journey. Later he would appoint Timothy to serve as their pastor/teacher. The two letters written to Timothy also are about the church at Ephesus. The last of the apostles, John, would serve the church as well, before his banishment by Rome to the island of Patmos.

Ephesus is one of the seven churches of Asia and will be the first church addressed by John in the book of Revelation (Rev. 2:1-7). Paul first brought the gospel or good news of Christ to the city as he traveled from Corinth in Greece back to Jerusalem, probably to attend the Passover Feast. The year was probably 54 AD.

Acts 18:19 tells us Paul first visited the Jewish Synagogue in Ephesus, as was his usual custom when he traveled to other towns or cities. You might note at other times when Paul taught in Synagogues he ended up being run out of town.

It was probably during Paul's absence that a young man by the name of Apollos came to Ephesus from Alexandria. Alexandria was a grand city near the mouth of the Nile River on the Mediterranean Sea. Apollos was said to be eloquent in his speech and had a great mastery of the Old Testament scriptures.

Apollos knew the teachings about Jesus, but his teaching was lacking as he had not been instructed about the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Soon he was being tutored by the teaching of Priscilla and her husband Aquilla, who was a Jew by birth but had converted to Christianity. They were very much a part of Paul's advance team that helped him when he arrived in the cities to teach the gospel.

Paul would spend 2 years teaching in the church at Ephesus, making it the longest of all Paul's ministries. The letter is 6 chapters in length, with the first 3 chapters speaking to doctrinal issues, while the latter 3 are more practical in application to the readers life.

The people at Ephesus had a mixture of Jews and Gentiles so the theme of unity in the church is one of Paul's favorite topics. Enjoy your read and guard our unity in Christ.