

The City of Ephesus

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Introduction

The city of **Ephesus was one of the major factors in the spread of early Christianity.** The Apostle Paul came there at least twice in the middle of the first century. It was the most important port city in Asia Minor and was located along the major trade routes. It was also a perfect place for the teachings of the young faith called “**The Way**” to be disseminated. By the time we conclude I hope the reader will have a clearer understanding of how Ephesus fit into the spread of early Christianity.

History

The origin and details of the founding of the city of Ephesus are shrouded in mystery. The earliest physical evidence of occupation is a Mycenaean grave dating from 1400 to 1300 B.C. The original city was called by various names during its long history. **One tradition attributes the founding of the city to a tribe of Amazons. Supposedly, they built the city near “where the mother goddess of the earth was born.”** Yet another theory is that the first inhabitants were Carians and Leleges who were driven out by **Androcles, the king of Athens.** **Most scholars regard him as the founder of the city.**

Around **560 B.C.** the city was besieged by the **fabulously wealthy King Croesus** and it came into his possession. **Croesus was defeated in 557 B.C. by Cyrus the Great of Persia** and Ephesus fell to them. The city later came into Greek hands under **Alexander the Great around 334 B.C.** Lysimachus, who was Alexander’s successor, put up a huge wall around the city that may have been 6000 feet long. Lysimachus was defeated by Seleucus I in 281 B.C. and Ephesus was ruled by the Selucids until they were defeated by **the Romans around 190 B.C.**

Geography

Ephesus was located along the coast of what is now Asiatic Turkey. It was situated along the deeply indented west coast line of Asia Minor along with three other major cities, **Smyrna, Miletus, and Pergamum.** All of these cities are mentioned in the New Testament. Ephesus was located between its two nearest neighbors, Smyrna and Miletus.

During the Roman Period, Ephesus became the chief city of Asia and remained so for over 200 years. **Caesar Augustus declared the city to be the “First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia.”** The main highway from Asia to Rome began at Ephesus. **Roman milestones used Ephesus as the point of origin to measure distances because it was a travel hub and a great commercial center.** As a **major seaport,** its ships traded with Greece, Egypt, Levant and Ionian cities. It was unquestionably the largest and most important commercial and religious center in the Roman province of Asia. **The harbor, the river and the highway system made Ephesus the most accessible city in Asia.**

The City

The city occupied a vast area and **its population may have reached as high as half of a million people during the first century. It was notorious for its luxury and licentiousness. Sorcery or magic was exceedingly common.** The inhabitants of Ephesus were half Greek and half Asiatic. There were also **Jews** in the city before Paul came. Specifically, **Apollo** was mentioned along with twelve others who were disciples of John the Baptist. No remains of a synagogue have been found, but Paul mentions teaching in one for three months.

Acts 19:8 Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

There were many important buildings, but the most impressive building was **the Temple of Diana** and we will look at it closely in a separate section below. Another major building was **The Great Theater** that was built during the Hellenistic period. It was made out of marble, was 500' in diameter and seated approximately 25,000 people. This was the Theater where the riot took place that is mentioned in **Acts 19:19-41**. The entire disturbance was started by the idol makers and artisans connected to the **Temple of Diana**.

The Temple Of Diana or Artemis

The temple sat at the head of the harbor of Ephesus and was the central focus of the city. **It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It is believed to be the largest building that was ever built by the Greeks** and it is certainly the largest known Greek temple in antiquity. **The temple was the city's main attraction** and it brought Ephesus great wealth and prominence. It was not only a worship center, it was a museum and the largest bank in the East. It is widely believed that the Temple was visited by **Alexander the Great, Mark Anthony, Cleopatra, Cesar Augustus, Nero** and numerous other individuals from the pages of history.

The temple was destroyed and rebuilt seven different times. The seventh version was the most magnificent and it was the one standing in Paul's day. The construction of this edition of the building took 220 years to complete. **Made primarily of marble, it was 425' long and 220' wide. It had 127 columns 60' high and each one was a gift from a different king.** It housed precious art and treasures from all over the known world.

The idol of the Goddess Diana was described as wooden or made from vines. It was also described as being hideous, mummy shaped, covered with breasts, filled with holes and incongruously attired with gorgeous apparel. The image had many letters or words written on it and these were thought to have great magical power and significance. "**Ephesus**" means "**guardian**" and may refer to the people being the guardian of the idol. **The people of the region believed that the idol fell down from heaven, as is mentioned in Acts 19.**

The New Testament

Ephesus holds a rich position in Scripture. Paul considered the city to be a center of vast influence. It had become the unofficial capital of Asia Minor approximately 200 years before his first visit; during his second great missionary journey (**Acts 19:19-21**). He referred to his ability to minister effectively in the city specifically in **1 Cor 16:9** when he said, “*for a great door and effectual is opened unto me.*” **Acts 19:9** tells us that Paul taught in the synagogue for 3 months and in the hall of Tyrannus for 2 years during his third missionary journey. **Acts 20:3** counts **Paul’s entire stay in Ephesus as three years.**

If we believe that Paul literally “*fought wild beasts*” in Ephesus, as is mentioned in **1 Cor. 15:32**, it probably occurred in **The Great Stadium**. **Demetrius the silver smith** started a riot on behalf of the idol makers and tradesmen who made their living off of the worship of Diana. This is the riot involving Paul and others that ended up in the huge 25,000 seat **Great Theater** in **Acts 19:23-41**. **The Great Theater** is mentioned specifically in **Acts 19:30**.

Paul left his friends **Aquila and Priscilla** in the city about A.D. 52 and promised to return soon in **Acts 18:18-21**. He later left **Timothy** there, according to **1 Tim 1:3**, and commended him to do the work of an evangelist in **2 Tim 4:5**. Paul’s friends **Trophimus** and **Tychicus** were probably natives of Ephesus as were his opponents **Onesiphorus, Hymeneus, Alexander, Hermogenes and Phygellus** (**Acts 18, 19 and 20**). The great apostle may have been using imagery from **the Temple of Diana** in some of his other letters.

The city’s magic arts and practices are referred to in the story Acts records in chapter 19 about the people burning materials worth 50,000 pieces of silver. This widespread interest in magic may have also been the reason that many so-called “*special miracles*” were done by Paul in Ephesus. He clearly had great success and encountered great opposition in the city. **Some believe that he was jailed there** and may have written some of his epistles from the jail. **Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians was written in Ephesus** and it may have been written from jail (**1 Cor 16:8**). There is an ancient tower in Ephesus that is called “*the Prison of St. Paul.*” It is impossible to know if he was ever actually incarcerated there.

In addition to Paul, **the apostle John is linked with Ephesus**. Church tradition holds that **he spent the last part of his life there**. We are told by church historians that John had jurisdiction over the seven leading churches in Asia and the city of Ephesus was his headquarters. **These seven churches are addressed specifically in the Apocalypse** and **Ephesus is mentioned in Rev. 2:1-7**. Ephesus was became one of the early strongholds of Gnosticism. The Gospel of John is widely believed to have been written, in part, to counter growing Gnosticism. Eusebius also tells us that **John and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are buried under the church of Ayasaluk located in Ephesus.**

Ephesians

Author: Written by Paul the Apostle.

Date: Written from a prison, probably in Rome; 60-62 AD shortly after his 3rd Missionary Journey. (see Acts 18:19-21, **Acts 19** and Acts 20:17-38.)

Original Recipients: Primarily **Gentile believers** in **Jesus** as Messiah.

Type of Literature: Historical Narrative and Personal Letter

Content: This letter presents many of Paul's profound theological ideas on holiness and unity, often expressed as prayers. It contains one of the major interpretive keys for **the Bride of Christ** in **Eph 5:28-32**. Some of the other major topics addressed are Salvation, Grace, God's Power, the Church, and **Spiritual Warfare**. This book does not specifically address any stipulated problems. It's impersonal and generally applicable to all believers. Paul uses the word "**Mystery**," six times in Ephesians. (Eph 1:9, Eph 3:3-4 (2X), Eph 3:9, Eph 5:32, Eph 6:19) **Mystery** in the NT represents a previously hidden thing, not obvious; in rabbinic writings, it denotes the mystic or a hidden sense. *Wilmington's Bible Handbook* says that 78 of 155 verses in Ephesians are repeated in Colossians with only slight changes in wording.

Background: Ephesus was one of the most important cities that Paul visited. It was the main city of Asia. **After Paul's death, the Apostle John made Ephesus his headquarters** until his own death. It's magnificent temple was the global epicenter of worship for the popular "goddess" **Diana**, also known as **Artemis**.

- a. **Magic charms**
- b. **Idol from Heaven.**
- c. **Sex cult.**
- d. **Banking center**
- e. **Wonder of the ancient world.**
- f. **25,000 seat Amphitheater** where they sometimes had people fight animals.

Ephesians 1 The Lord has chosen each of us in Jesus. (23 verses)

1) Apostolic introduction and greeting.

v. 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, **To God's holy people** in Ephesus, the **faithful in Christ Jesus**: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- I belong to God and I am a holy person.
 - I am faithful in **Christ Jesus**. Eph 1:1

- 2) **We are “chosen” in Christ Jesus, like the Jews are God’s “chosen people.”**
v. 3 Praise be to the God and Father of **our Lord Jesus Christ**, who has **blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.** 4 For **he chose us in him before the creation of the world** to be holy and blameless in his sight.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- I praise God, the Father of **my Lord Jesus Christ**
 - My Father has blessed **me in the heavenly realms** with every spiritual blessing.
 - He has given me his glorious grace in **Jesus Christ.** Eph 1:5-6

Note: Five times in Ephesians, Paul speaks of “heavenly realms,” which alludes directly to Jesus fulfilling Psalm 110. Three times Paul says we are seated there in “heavenly realms) with Jesus (1:3, 1:20 & 2:6) and twice, this concept is connected to spiritual warfare. (3:10 & 6:12)

Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my lord: "**Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool** for your feet." 2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, "**Rule in the midst of your enemies!**".. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "**You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.**"

Acts 2:32 This **Jesus hath God raised up**, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by **the right hand of God** exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For **David** is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.** KJV

- 3) **We are adopted as children of God through Jesus.**
v. 5 (In love) **he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- I was predestined to be adopted as God’s son, through **Jesus Christ.**
 - I am lovingly adopted as a son of God.
 - God loves me and He has given me His glorious grace in **Jesus.** Eph. 1:5-6

- 4) **In Jesus, we have the “mystery” of our redemption through His blood.**
v. 7 In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us **the mystery of his will** according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in **Christ**, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under **Christ.**

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- I have redemption through the blood of Jesus and my sins are forgiven.
 - He has also lavishly given me wisdom and understanding by His grace.
 - He has made **the mystery of His will in Christ** known to me. Eph 1:7-8

5) Another reference to Christians being part of God's chosen people.

v. 11 **In him we were also chosen**, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that **we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ**, might be for the praise of his glory.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- In **Jesus**, I am a chosen person and I was predestined to follow the plans of God. Eph1:11

6) Holy Spirit is given to the Bride of Christ as proof of our relationship.

v. 13 And you also were included in **Christ** when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. **When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal**, the promised **Holy Spirit**, 14 who is **a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance** until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

v. 14 He is given to us **like an engagement ring is given to a bride**, as the first installment of what's coming! **He is our hope-promise of a future inheritance which seals us** until we have all of redemption's promises and experience complete freedom—all for the supreme glory and honor of God! TPT

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- I was included in **Christ** when I first heard the word of truth.
 - When I believed the gospel my life was sealed in Him by the **Holy Spirit**.
 - **Holy Spirit** is with me now.
 - **He is my hope-promise of a future inheritance which seals me until I have all of redemption's promises.**
 - **God has given me His Spirit** as a deposit guaranteeing my future inheritance in glory. Eph 1:13-14

6) Paul's apostolic prayer for us:

v. 15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the **Lord Jesus** and your love for all God's people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, **remembering you in my prayers**. 17 I keep asking that the God of **our Lord Jesus Christ**, the glorious Father, may give you the **Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better**. 18 **I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened** in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. **That power** is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised **Christ** from the dead and **seated him at his right hand** in the **heavenly realms**, 21 **far above all rule and**

authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And **God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything** for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- I have great faith in **my Lord Jesus**.
 - I love all of the saints. Eph 1:15
- I give thanks to God for all of those who love **Jesus**.
 - I remember those who love **Jesus** in my prayers. Eph 1:16
- **I receive the Spirit of Wisdom and the Spirit of Revelation now**, so that I may know God, my glorious Father, even better. Eph 1:17
- My eyes are being enlightened, so that I can know the hope He has called me to.
 - I receive the glorious inheritance that God has provided for me.
 - I thank God for His incomparably great power that He has given to me and to all of us who believe. Eph 1:18-19a
- The power that God has given me is like the working of His mighty strength that raised **Christ** from the dead.
 - **I am seated with Jesus in heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, now and in the ages to come.** Eph 1:19b-21
- **I am part of the Church of Jesus Christ**, which is His body and I am filled with the fullness of Him in every way. Eph 1:22-23

Note: This is another passage where Paul speaks even more clearly of us being with Jesus in “heavenly realms,” which alludes directly to Psalm 110.

Ephesians 2 We are now alive in Jesus (22 verses)

1) We were dead in our sins before Christ.

v. 1 As for you, **you were dead in your transgressions and sins**, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of **the ruler of the kingdom of the air**, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- Before **Jesus**, I was dead in my transgressions and sins.
 - I was unwittingly serving the ruler of the kingdom of the air. Eph. 2:1

2) Our life is no longer based on selfish, worldly desires.

v. 3 All of us also lived among them **at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts**. Like the rest, **we were by nature deserving of wrath**.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- Before receiving **Jesus**, I was focused on satisfying my own desires and deserving of God's wrath. Eph. 2:3

3) God raised us up to be seated with Jesus in heavenly realms.

v. 4 **But** because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 **made us alive with Christ** even when we were dead in transgressions—it is **by grace you have been saved**. 6 **And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him** in the heavenly realms in **Christ Jesus**, in order that **in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus**.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- God, who is rich in mercy, saved me by His grace and made me alive in **Christ**. Eph 2:4-5
- God has raised me up **in Christ** and **seated me with Him in heavenly realms**, so He can show off His kindness and the incomparable riches of His grace toward me, in the ages to come. Eph 2:6-7

Note: This is the third passages where Paul speaks of us being with Jesus in “heavenly realms,” which alludes directly to Psalm 110.

4) Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus.

v. 8 **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—** 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in **Christ Jesus** to do **good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do**.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- I am already saved by grace through faith, which is a free gift from God.
 - I thank God for this wonderful gift that I now have. Eph 2:8-9
- I am God's workmanship and He created me in **Christ Jesus** to do good works that He has prepared in advance exclusively for me. Eph 2:10

5) We were not born under the covenants, but now Jesus has brought us in.

v. 11 Therefore, remember that formerly **you who are Gentiles by birth** and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, **excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise**, without hope and without God in the world. 13 **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ**.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- Before **Jesus**, I was separated from God and without hope. Eph. 2:11-12
- I am no longer far away from God, because I have been brought into His presence through **the blood of Jesus Christ**. Eph 2:13

6) **Jesus reconciled Jews and Gentiles in Himself making us new creations.**

v. 14 For **he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. **His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two**, thus making peace, 16 and in **one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross**, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- **Jesus** is my peace and he has made me and my Jewish brothers and sisters into parts of His One Body.
 - He has broken and destroyed the barriers that were between us by sacrificing His own sinless flesh on the cross.
 - **Jesus** has reconciled us to God and to each other.
 - Our Savior has made us into **One New Humanity**, consisting of redeemed Jews and Gentles.
 1. **Gentile People** (from Adam)
 2. **Jewish People** (from Abraham and Moses)
 3. **One New Humanity** (born from **Jesus and Holy Spirit**) Eph 2:14-16

7) **We have access to our Heavenly Father as only the Jews once did.**

v. 18 For through him we **both have access to the Father by one Spirit**. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but **fellow citizens with God's people** and also members of his household, 20 **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone**. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And **in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit**.

What does this passage declare and decree about me?

- **Through Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit**, I have the same access to God the Father as His redeemed Jewish people. Eph 2:18
- Together with God's chosen Jewish people, I am a citizen of God's household that is built on **Jesus Christ**. Eph 2:19-20
- I am part of the Lord's temple and I am being joined together with other Saints to become **a place for God's Holy Spirit to dwell**. Eph 2:21-22