

# Ephesians Introduction

written and compiled by Gary Kukis (first draft)

**Ephesians 1–6**

**Advanced Church Age Doctrine**

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10).

## General Comments:

Of the prison epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Philipians, and Philemon), Ephesians and Colossians are the most alike. Tychicus delivers both of these letters (Ephesians 6:21 Colossians 4:7).

Ephesians may not have been written specifically to the Ephesians (more on that later).

Let me suggest that Paul wrote Colossians, had Tychicus deliver it, and then received letters from the Ephesians and others who really required a letter similar to the one sent to the Colossians. Therefore, Paul wrote a second letter covering many of the same topics, but sent it more intentioned as a circular letter. This is strictly a theory, but many Christian writers hold to it.

Dr. Bob Utley: *This book has been called the "crowning jewel," or capstone, of Paul's theology. All of the great themes of Paul started in Galatians, developed in Romans, and are now expressed in Ephesians in a wonderful summary fashion.*<sup>1</sup>

Two important topics: who is the author and to whom is Ephesians written?

## Authorship

Both Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria believed Paul to be the author of this letter. Similarly, because Ephesians is accepted as Scripture, Paul's name at the beginning indicates the Paul is the author (Polycarpa, Tertullian).<sup>2</sup>

R. B. Thieme, Jr.: *By way of background information, this letter was written by Paul from Roman imprisonment in 62 AD. Both Ephesians and Colossians were delivered by Tychicus. Onesimus was*

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Book comments for Ephesians.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament, An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*; from e-Sword, Ephesians chapter comments.

*the bearer of Philemon. Ephesians was designed to correct reversionism in the Roman province of Asia. And not only to correct reversionism but to erect edification complexes and to ultimately move the believers into the supergrace life.*<sup>3</sup>

## Date of Writing

Paul is under house arrest in Rome when he writes letters to the Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and to Philemon (an individual). A.D. 60–62.

Paul appears to have been imprisoned twice in Rome. (1) Two years around A.D. 60–62. (2) A few years later, during which time Paul wrote the pastoral epistles. Paul was executed during this second incarceration.

## Recipients

There are two primary reasons for believing that the Ephesians were not specifically the recipients of this epistle. (1) The earliest manuscripts lack the words *in Ephesus*; and (2) this letter lacks any personal greetings from Paul. He certainly had many people in Ephesus with whom he was close, but nowhere do we read, “I need to extend my warmest greetings to \_\_\_\_, who \_\_\_\_.” These two things taken together strongly suggest that this was not a letter specifically written to the Ephesians.

At the end of this letter, Paul refers to Tychicus as *the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord*. Paul tells his readers, *(He) will tell you everything*. Both quotations taken from the ESV. If this was a letter from Paul, to be copied and circulated to a number of specific churches, then this would be part of the *everything* that Tychicus would tell them. Specifically, Tychicus was sent by Paul, *for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts*. So a myriad of personal information would be carried in the brain of Tychicus. He may have either known or had a separate letter (s) of personal greetings which he shared.

Tychicus also appears to be associated with the letter to the Colossians and to Titus, both of which contain considerable number of personal greetings.

If Ephesians is to be a circular letter, this is not told to us in the letter itself, but this could have been related to the instructions that Paul gave to Tychicus. Wherever he arrived first, he would determine how many copies could be made and where they might go. Did he go to Ephesus first?

About the only thing we could say about Ephesians and Colossians is, even though Tychicus delivered both letters, they were probably not composed at the same time simply because there is so much overlapping material. Paul may have been inspired to write a circular letter a few weeks or months after writing Colossians.

*R. B. Thieme, Jr.: The true destination of Ephesians. The stated destination in Ephesians 1:1, “at Ephesus,” is not found in the original text. This phrase is not found in any of the better MSS. Basil the Great (329–379) testifies that it was never found in any of the ancient MSS. The absence of a personal greeting plus the fact that Paul does not call the believers “Beloved brethren” indicates that this epistle was a circular letter rather than written to one church. Actually it is a circular letter to the churches in the Roman province of Asia, the seven churches of Revelation 2 & 3. The fact that the benedictions of this epistle are in the third person rather than the second person also indicates that this is a circular letter. There is also a patristic evidence which favours a circular letter to the Roman province of Asia coming from Tertullian and OriGenesis So there is no question about the fact that this was addressed to a number of churches. This also explains why the content varies a little bit from Colossians which was addressed to one church only.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> From R. B. Thieme, Jr.’s 1972 Ephesians Series; Lesson #1; 8/10/1972.

<sup>4</sup> From R. B. Thieme, Jr.’s 1972 Ephesians Series; Lesson #1; 8/10/1972.

On the other hand, I use four ancient manuscripts (all available through e-sword), and all of them have this letter addressed to the Ephesians. This is accepted almost universally in the translations. I refer to four complete Greek manuscripts, and we have no complete Greek manuscript going back to A.D. 300 or 400 or even 500.

I also refer to the Complete Apostles' Bible (Greek), the Douay-Rheims Bible (Latin), and the Original Aramaic New Testament (Aramaic) and all of these have *Ephesus* in v. 1.

### **Ephesians as a part of the Canon of Scripture.**

Generally speaking, man recognizes the canon or discovers the canon of Scripture, but man does not determine the canon of Scripture. There were two fundamentals when it came to determining the canon of the New Testament: the books had to be written by an Apostles or by someone closely associated with an Apostle; and they had to be written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

Accepted by early church fathers as authoritative (from Dr. Bob Utley<sup>5</sup>):

- 1) Clement of Rome, in A.D. 95, wrote a letter to Corinth that quotes Ephesians 4:4-6
- 2) Ignatius (A.D. 30-107) quotes from Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 2:19; Ephesians 3:4-9
- 3) Polycarp (A.D. 65-155), the disciple of John the Apostle, and the bishop of Smyrna asserts Paul's authorship
- 4) Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200) asserts Paul's authorship
- 5) Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-210) asserts Paul's authorship.

The books of the New Testament were recognized as authoritative by a very organic and rather slow process. Early church fathers quotes from these books. People who knew simply understood that such quotations were indications of divine authority. At some point, people began to discuss, which books are specifically authoritative and which are not? Some simply believed they should list the books in the canon. Others made translations into other languages, so they needed to determine which books were authoritative. Then various church groups met as councils and officially determined the canon.

To give you an idea, Clement of Rome (c 95–97) was making a doctrinal point in a letter, and then quoted from the book of Matthew. It may not have even occurred to him that he was saying, *This book is authoritative; it belongs in the New Testament canon.* At the point in time, even though certain books were accepted as authoritative, there may not have been a lot of discussion about a canon of books which are authoritative like the Old Testament books are authoritative. However, by the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, certain theologians recognized that some written material was authoritative and could be trusted, and others were not. This would not have been discussed by every theologian at the time. Only a few, like Irenaeus (circa 130–202), understood this as an issue of canonicity. Many theologians at this time quoted various books as authoritative, but were not, as far as we know, discussing issues of canonicity. However, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of a canon became much more important to the theologians of that era. This is, as I said, a slow organic process. God did not appear in the sky to 50 believers and say, "Okay, knuckleheads, this is My canon of Scripture. Write the names of these books down."

If the concept of canonicity inspires you, then I don't think you can get a better book on this topic than Introduction to the Bible by Geisler and Nix. Particularly as a new believer, this book answered a boatload of questions for me.

---

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Book comments for Ephesians.

### The Pauline Epistles Fall into Four General Categories:

1. The second missionary journey; During the second missionary journey Paul wrote 1Thessalonians from Corinth in 52 AD. He wrote 2Thessalonians from Corinth in 53 AD. So it was about 52 AD that Paul began writing.
2. The third missionary journey; Then during the third missionary journey he wrote four epistles: Galatians, written from Ephesus in 55 AD; 1Corinthians, written from Ephesus in 55 AD; 2Corinthians, written from Philippi in 57 AD; Romans, written from Corinth just before Paul left for Jerusalem in 58 AD. From 58 AD we have a silence from Paul for four years. He went into reversionism by going to Jerusalem. When Paul wrote Romans he should have carried the epistle himself to Rome, he should have gone to Rome from Corinth. He got out of the geographical will of God by going to Jerusalem. Once Paul was out of the geographical will of God, he got outside of the operational will of God. Paul had scar tissue on the soul.
3. The first Roman imprisonment; After his recovery he wrote possibly the four most important things he ever wrote: Ephesians from Rome in 62 AD, Philippians from Rome in 63 AD, Colossians from Rome in 62 AD, Philemon from Rome in 62 AD.
4. After the first Roman imprisonment. Then we have Paul's release, a fourth missionary journey and a second imprisonment. During the fourth missionary journey he wrote 1Timothy from Macedonia in 65 AD; Titus from Macedonia (on the way to Nilopolis) in 66 AD; 2Timothy from Rome in 67 AD. Paul began writing in 52 AD and he died in 67 AD (or as late as the Spring 68).

From 08/10/1972 Ephesians Lesson #1.

Preliminary considerations (by Ron Snider)

1. Letter-writing has been in existence since ancient times and has been defined by
  - a. These communications were designed to connect people that were separated geographically but who were united by blood, affection, or by other
  - b. In its most basic form, the letter is a private matter, intended only for the person or persons to whom it is addressed.
2. However, the basic letter differs from an epistle in several ways.
  - a. First, the matter of authority is often not present in letters between two individuals, or in a letter to a group; the New Testament epistles were largely written by spiritual authorities.
  - b. The second difference is that a real letter is designed only for the person or persons to whom the correspondence is sent, whereas the epistle may be written with a larger audience in view. Colossians 4:16-17
  - c. The third difference is that the content of an epistle is often didactic (designed to teach), having theological and/or hortatory components.
3. The necessity of writing letters likely became immediately apparent to the apostles, who served as the foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:20) but who could not always be physically present with their converts and congregations.
4. It is clear that the leaders in the early Church recognized that face-to-face communication was superior to other formats and was the format they typically desired. 1Thessalonians 2:17, 3:10 2John 1:12 3John 1:14
5. However, the inability to be in more than one place at a time led the apostles and their associates to remain in contact with individuals and congregations by means of written communications with those individuals and local churches.
6. Another important difference between these epistles and other letters is the fact that the authors of scripture were writing under inspiration; their language and content were directed by God the Holy Spirit in such a way as to ensure its accuracy. 2Timothy 3:16 2Peter 1:20
7. Some of these inspired letters have been preserved, and they form the bulk of the New Testament, providing a written record of apostolic doctrines and practices that the Church may study profitably. Luke 1:1-3 2Timothy 3:16
8. However, one must recognize that profitable study involves much more than the student simply having a translation of these writings in his own language; profitable study involves more than just reading a letter.

- a. While these translations make the Bible more accessible to a wider audience, reading a translation is not the same as exegetical Bible study.
  - b. In order to study the Scriptures profitably, one must recognize that a knowledge of the languages in which these letters were written is
  - c. In fact, if one is to attempt to study and teach the Bible, he must be proficient in multiple disciplines that include an understanding of the original languages, knowing and consistently practicing hermeneutic principles (including textual criticism), and understanding the history and culture of the time in which the text was written.
  - d. Additionally, the interpreter must have a sound theological grid which protects him from promoting or accepting teachings that are at odds with the faith, the orthodox body of teaching. Jude 1:3
  - e. However, the interpreter cannot become inordinately bound to his theological grid; he must be willing to hear and honestly evaluate new or contrary information that challenges his frame of reference.
  - f. Additionally, he must be intellectually honest enough to change his mind when presented with biblical evidence that contradicts any theological position.
9. God has provided the system necessary (GAP) for every student/disciple to learn the realm of Bible doctrine and to become proficient in theological matters; this is designed to lead to proficiency in the practical matters related to living the Christian way of life.

From Snider's Ephesians 1 notes found here: <http://www.makarios-bible-church.org/newtest.html>

#### Outlining Ephesians (by Ron Snider)

1. As with many of the other Pauline works, the book of Ephesians may readily be divided into two sections: The doctrinal and the hortatory (exhortations and commands).
2. The first section (Ephesians 1-3) sets forth the important principles of doctrine and theology that are the foundations of the Christian way of life.
3. The second section relates to the matter of application within the Christian way of life; Paul provides exhortations that demonstrate the practical ways in which sound doctrine is to be expressed in the lifestyle of the believer. Ephesians 4:6
4. As might be expected, there is only one imperative in the first half of Ephesians (Ephesians 2:11), but the second half of the book contains 33 imperatives and a number of constructions that use infinitives or participles that have imperatival force.
  - a. A complementary infinitive is used in Ephesians 4:1 with imperatival
  - b. In at least three places, aorist participles are used with imperatival force. Ephesians 4:25
5. Entire outline.
  - a. Greeting. Ephesians 1:1-2
  - b. God's provision of spiritual blessings. Ephesians 1:3-14
  - c. Prayer for wisdom and continued revelation. Ephesians 1:15-23
  - d. Pre-salvation status of all unbelievers. Ephesians 2:1-3
  - e. God's provision: Life in Christ. Ephesians 2:4-10
  - f. Unification of Jew and Gentile in one body. Ephesians 2:11-22
  - g. Paul's stewardship of the mystery. Ephesians 3:1-12
  - h. Prayer for proper spiritual dynamics that lead to spiritual maturity. Ephesians 3:14-21
  - i. Exhortation to conduct oneself in a worthy fashion. Ephesians 4:1-6
  - j. The gift of communicators for the Church. Ephesians 4:7-11
  - k. Communicators provided for the purpose of edification of the body. Ephesians 4:12-16
  - l. Exhortation to avoid pre-salvation lifestyle. Ephesians 4:17-32
  - m. Imitation of God: Walking in love. Ephesians 5:1-7
  - n. Walking in the light. Ephesians 5:8-14
  - o. Walking in wisdom. Ephesians 5:15-21
  - p. Authority and submission in the Church.
    - i. Marriage. Ephesians 5:21-33
    - ii. Family. Ephesians 6:1-4

- iii. Servants and masters. Ephesians 6:5-9
- q. The armor of God. Ephesians 6:10-17
- r. Concluding exhortations to prayer. Ephesians 6:18-19
- s. Personal matters and benediction. Ephesians 6:20-24

From Snider's Ephesians Introduction notes found here: <http://www.makarios-bible-church.org/newtest.html>