

Ephesians Bible Study – Background Information

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 better understand the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church.

The first three chapters are about doctrine, especially an emphasis on the gospel. The last three chapters are lesson in living the faith.

Paul was a very intense person. He writes with that same zeal. Frequently he repeats things to make an important point.

Ephesians asks and answers the three big question of life: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

Ephesians was written by Paul about the same time he wrote Colossians, around A.D. 60, while he was imprisoned in Rome (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20).

Ephesus was a major urban and trade center in the Roman Empire, ranking with Rome, Corinth and Alexandria. It was located in what we know today as Turkey.

Its temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Paul spent more time in Ephesus (three years) than in any other city he visited. While there, his life was threatened by a riot (Acts 19). His farewell words to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20) are some of the most touching in the NT.

Paul had a major impact on the region (Acts 19:26) and together with Apollos, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila was instrumental in forming a Christian community with a flourishing church years before John became bishop of the church in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19).

By the time John wrote the book of Revelations (late in the apostolic period), the church at Ephesus had lost some of its original zeal. Revelation 2:4 states that they "have forsaken their first love."

Today it is a miserable village called Ayasalook. A traveler in the 1960's found only three Christians there, and they were scarcely familiar with St. Paul and St. John.