

INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

AUTHOR

1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, faithful in Christ Jesus."

3:1 "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles -"

Challenges to Pauline authorship:

1. Very similar to Colossians, which was written first. Therefore someone could have copied from Colossians.
2. The author repeats many terms between Colossians and Ephesians, and even uses some of the same terms to mean different things in the two letters. Paul allegedly would not have done this.
3. Many passages suggest that Paul did not know his readers (ex: 1:15, "Ever since I heard about your faith..."), but Paul spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31, when saying farewell to the Ephesian elders Paul says, "Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.").

Response:

1. Paul wrote both Colossians and Ephesians while he was under house arrest in Rome in approximately AD 60-61. Given the close proximity of their writing, similarity is to be expected.
2. Differences in meanings for terms are also to be expected when you are writing to different audiences. Paul was writing to different audiences. Ex: "Bat" in one context means a flying rodent, but in another it refers to something you use to hit a baseball. Context determines what we mean by a term.
3. The reason Paul sometimes seems to not know his readers is because this was an encyclical epistle. Paul wanted it read at numerous churches throughout Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The earliest manuscripts do not contain "in Ephesus" in 1:1. It appears that the reader was to fill in the name of the church he was reading to.

RECIPIENTS

It was meant for Ephesus, but not only for Ephesus. This may be the letter Paul was referring to in Colossians 4:16 ("After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea."). Some scholars hypothesize that Ephesians followed the same route as the messages to the churches in Revelation 2 & 3, which starts at Ephesus and ends at Laodicea. If so, see attached map for the route it took.

Ephesus was an important port city on the western edge of Asia Minor and at the intersection of two major land routes. It was on the path from regions to the east to Rome by either land or by sea. Ephesus was a "tourist trap", getting a lot of its income from people coming to visit the temple of Artemis (Diana), the fertility goddess. This is why a near riot broke out in Acts 19:23-41 when some craftsmen who made their living building idols felt that Paul and his followers were threatening their livelihood by their message.

THEME

The overall theme of Ephesians is that all believers are one in Christ. It is a call for unity, largely in the context of Jews versus Gentiles, but Paul moves on to address some other types of relationships as well. Paul spends the first three chapters establishing that we are all one in Christ, then the last three chapters discussing how we should live our lives as a result.

OUTLINE

We will cover Ephesians in six lessons as follows:

- I. We were chosen by God for a purpose (1:1-23)
- II. We are made alive in Christ to become one (2:1-22)
- III. The mystery of Christ - gathering us together as one body (3:1-21)
- IV. Living as one body: Sanctification and shedding your former self (4:1-32)
- V. Be imitators of God: Live a life of love and purity (5:1-20)
- VI. Unity in relationships and putting on the armor of God (5:21-6:24)