

The View Concerning the Recipients of the Epistle

Certain learned men are of the opinion that this Epistle was written later and addressed unto the people of *Northern Galatia*, whither Saint Paul journeyed during his second missionary voyage. Nevertheless, the matter dealt with in the Epistle remained the same in either case.

I. Southern Galatia

This region lay in the lower part of Asia Minor. During his first missionary journey, Saint Paul visited the provinces of *Pamphylia*, *Pisidia*, *Lycaonia*, and *Southern Phrygia*.

The people of this land were known to be hasty, passionate, and unstable in their temperament. They were reputed as being fond of disputes and prone to contention. Their emotional nature was evident, as seen in Lystra, where the same people who desired to worship Saint Paul at one moment, at the next took up stones to slay him (Acts 14:11–19). Even so, they received the Gospel with eagerness, yet soon turned aside unto another gospel.

The Cities Where Saint Paul Established Churches

1. Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:14–52)

Saint Paul began his ministry there in the synagogue of the Jews (v. 14). Some of the Gentiles were moved and desired to hear more of his message (v. 42). The whole city gathered with great interest to hear the Word (v. 44). But the Jews, being filled with envy, opposed the Apostle (v. 45). Then Saint Paul turned unto the Gentiles (v. 46), and many among them believed (vv. 48–49). The Jews stirred up the rulers and cast Paul and Barnabas out of their borders (v. 50).

2. Iconium (Acts 14:1–5)

In Iconium also, Saint Paul preached in the synagogue (v. 1). Many Jews and Gentiles believed. Yet some Jews opposed and stirred up the multitude, causing strife and division. Violence was plotted against the Apostles, even unto stoning. For the sake of peace, Paul and Barnabas departed from that city.

3. Lystra (Acts 14:8–20)

Saint Paul preached in the streets, and when through him a lame man was healed, the people thought him to be a god. When they prepared to offer sacrifices unto Paul and Barnabas, the Apostles restrained them, saying they were but men.

Then certain Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded the multitude against them. They stoned Paul and left him for dead, but God raised him up again.

4. Derbe (Acts 14:20–21)

In Derbe, Saint Paul preached the Gospel, and many believed. From thence he returned through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and setting the churches in order.

5. Pamphylia (Acts 13:13; 14:24–28)

Saint Paul had first made a brief stay there. Upon his return from Derbe, he again preached in that region. Thereafter he came back to Antioch, where he rested from his labours (Acts 14:28).

The Epistle of Saint Paul the Apostle unto the Church at Ephesus

Background of the Epistle to the Ephesians

Saint Paul the Apostle first visited Ephesus during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19). At that time, he desired to hasten toward Jerusalem; therefore, he remained but a few days, reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue.

The Church at Ephesus was later established during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1–41).

The Establishment of the Church at Ephesus

1. Those who first received Christ in Ephesus had been disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1–7).
2. Saint Paul taught for about three months in the local synagogue (Acts 19:8).
3. When opposition arose in the synagogue, he departed and taught daily in the school of one named Tyrannus for the space of two years (Acts 19:9–10), so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:10).
4. According to some scholars, the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation were either directly or indirectly founded through the ministry of Saint Paul during this period.
5. God wrought mighty miracles by the hands of Saint Paul (Acts 19:11).
6. Many that had practiced magic believed, and they brought their books together and burned them before all men (Acts 19:18–19). Thus the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20).
7. Through the preaching of the Gospel, the trade of silver shrines made for the goddess Diana was greatly hindered (Acts 19:24–27).
8. A silversmith named Demetrius stirred up a great uproar against Saint Paul (Acts 19:29–41).
9. Perceiving the danger, Saint Paul withdrew from Ephesus that he might continue the work elsewhere (Acts 20:1; 1 Corinthians 16:9).

Thus, the Apostle ministered in Ephesus for nearly three years — the longest time he spent in any single church during his ministry.

The City of Ephesus

Ephesus was one of the five great cities of the ancient world, along with Alexandria, Antioch, Corinth, and Rome.

1. It was a great seaport, uniting the trade routes of the East and the West.
2. The city was exceedingly wealthy, yet, like Corinth, it had fallen into deep moral corruption.
3. It was famous for the magnificent temple of Diana (Artemis), counted among the seven wonders of the ancient world.
4. Many Jews dwelt there, having been dispersed from their own land, and there was a synagogue in the city (Acts 18:19; 19:8–10). Some of these Jews later became part of the company that stirred up the tumult against Saint Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27–32).
5. Several notable servants of God ministered in Ephesus, such as Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos, Timothy, and Saint John the Apostle.

The Time and Circumstance of the Writing of the Epistle to the Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by Saint Paul the Apostle during his first

imprisonment at Rome. There are four letters which are called the *Prison Epistles* — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. In each of these, the Apostle maketh mention of his bonds (Ephesians 6:19–20; Philippians 1:12–13; Colossians 4:18; Philemon 1:10).

It is believed that this Epistle was written between the years A.D. 60 and 64. Unlike certain other letters, it was not addressed to correct a particular local issue, but was rather a general message of divine reflection. It was sent together with other Epistles, revealing the meditations of the Apostle's heart while he was bound in chains for Christ's sake.

The Purpose of the Other Prison Epistles

1. *Philippians* — A letter of thanksgiving and encouragement amid affliction.
2. *Colossians* — Written for the correction of false teachings.
3. *Philemon* — A personal plea concerning the return of his servant Onesimus.

Themes of the Epistle to the Ephesians

While in prison, Saint Paul fixed his gaze not upon his chains but upon the heavenly riches that were his in Christ. His mind dwelt not on what he lacked, but on what he possessed in the Lord (Ephesians 1:3–14).

This passage standeth as one of the most exalted doxologies in all his writings. It beginneth with the words “*Blessed be*”, and is filled with praise and thanksgiving for the spiritual blessings bestowed by God. The language is lofty and poetic, and many believe it may have been sung as a hymn in the early Church.

The Threefold Work of Redemption

1. *The Work of the Father* (verses 3–6): He hath purposed and planned our salvation.
2. *The Work of the Son* (verses 7–12): He hath redeemed us and paid the price of our salvation.
3. *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (verses 13–14): He hath sealed us and applied the redemption unto our souls.

The Spiritual Blessings in Christ

1. We were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.
2. We were predestined unto adoption as sons.
3. We have obtained an inheritance.
4. We are accepted in the Beloved.
5. We have received forgiveness of sins.
6. We have been redeemed through His blood.
7. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.
8. We have heard the Word of Truth.
9. We believed, and were made partakers of salvation through faith.

Saint Paul lifted his thoughts above earthly circumstances and fixed them upon the heavenly realm (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12, 23). The phrase “*in heavenly places*” appeared repeatedly throughout the Epistle, revealing the true sphere of spiritual conflict and victory — not on earth, but in the high places of the Spirit.

Distinctive Features of the Epistle to the Ephesians

The Three Spiritual Positions of the Believer

Saint Paul the Apostle described in this Epistle three spiritual states or positions of the believer in Christ:

1. **Sitting** — “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). This signified our rest, fellowship, and authority in the risen Lord.
2. **Walking** — “I therefore beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1). This speaketh of our conduct in daily life, manifesting the character of Christ.
3. **Standing** — “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). This revealed the believer’s steadfastness and victory in spiritual warfare.

The Unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ

Saint Paul also declared the mystery of the union between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:11–22). He described first the former condition of the Gentiles — their separation, alienation, and hopelessness without God:

1. They were Gentiles in the flesh.
2. They were called “uncircumcision.”
3. They were without Christ.
4. They were strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.
5. They were aliens from the covenants of promise.
6. They were without hope.
7. They were without God in the world.
8. They were far off.
9. They were in a state of enmity against both God and man.

The Present Condition of the Gentiles in Christ

But now Saint Paul proclaimed the glorious transformation wrought through the cross of Christ:

1. They are *in Christ Jesus*.
2. They are *made nigh by the blood of Christ*.
3. They are reconciled unto God and unto man.
4. They are made *one with the Jews* in the household of faith.
5. The *middle wall of partition* is broken down.
6. Enmity is abolished.
7. A *new man* is created in Christ.
8. Both are united in *one body*, reconciled unto God.
9. Peace is preached to them that were afar off and to them that were nigh.
10. Through Christ, both have *access unto the Father* by one Spirit.

Thus, the Epistle revealed the divine mystery of unity — that through Christ Jesus, all nations are brought into one new humanity, sharing one faith, one Spirit, and one hope in the household of God.

