

“Ephesians in the New Testament”

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The church of Ephesus played a significant role in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. By simply noting the occurrences of the city in the New Testament it becomes apparent that the church of Ephesus was a prominent center for the apostle Paul and the apostle John. Let us consider the following verses as they are found in the New Testament record:

1. Paul’s first visit to Ephesus happened in Acts 18:18-21.

This is the first occurrence of the word in the New Testament.

2. In Paul’s absence, Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).

When you read the narrative, it is straightforward and clear.

3. Paul returned to Ephesus, taught the disciples and evangelized the unbelieving (Acts 19)
 - a. Taught on Spirit baptism (Acts 19:1-7)
 - b. Taught on the kingdom God for two years (Acts 19:8-10)
 - c. God performed extraordinary miracles through Paul (Acts 19:11-22)
 - d. Challenged the cult of Artemis of the Ephesians and experienced a violent mob (Acts 19:23-20:1 [perhaps this is what Paul alluded to when he wrote, “I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus {1 Cor. 15:32}]).

4. Paul returns to Ephesus and addresses the Elders of the local churches (Acts 20:17-21:1).

Paul wished to encourage the weak and to guard them against the savage wolves who would teach perverse things.

5. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8).

Remember the content of 1 Corinthians. Problems exist inside the community of faith and the book/letter contains his response to their questions and problems.

6. Paul encouraged Timothy to remain on at Ephesus so that he might instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines (1 Tim. 1:3).

First and Second Timothy speak to the shepherd to protect the flock of God. Both address the ideas of biblical structure and mission. We must note the similarity between the charges given in Acts 20:17ff and what is found in 1 and 2 Timothy.

7. Paul also speaks well of Onesiphorus who aided Paul while imprisoned (2 Tim. 1:16-18) and Tychicus who was a co-laborer (2 Tim. 4:12).

Paul was often accompanied by co-workers who labored with him in the strengthening of existing churches and the establishing of new ones.

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8. The apostle John also writes specifically to the church in Ephesus (Rev. 1:11; 2:1-7). Their orthodoxy (i.e. right belief) was impeccable, but their orthodoxy (i.e. right behavior) was challenged. It is here we read, "You have left your first love."

The pastoral letters are written near the end of Paul's life (AD 64). Thirty years later John is encouraged by their theological purity and defense of the gospel, but warns and cautions against a theology that is devoid of Christ. It is not enough for people to know what you are against; they must know what you are for. People should know what we are for long before they come to understand what we are against. Neither Paul nor John would argue against doctrinal purity. Both have much to say as it relates to correct thinking, but both are equally passionate about correct fervor manifesting itself in correct behavior. The question they would ask and we are confronted by is simply, "Do you love Jesus?" "Is He first in your theology, your thinking and your life?" That thought must dominate our doctrinal discussion, and from it must flow our "good works."

PAUL'S LETTERS				
Period	Letter	Origin	Date	Reference
After the 1st missionary journey	Galatians	Antioch of Syria	49 A.D.	Acts 15:1ff
During the 2nd missionary journey	1 Thessalonians	Corinth	51 A.D.	Acts 17:1ff
	2 Thessalonians	Corinth	51 A.D.	
During the 3rd missionary journey	1 Corinthians	Ephesus	56 A.D.	Acts 18:1ff
	2 Corinthians	Macedonia	56 A.D.	
	Romans	Corinth	57 A.D.	
During the 1st Roman imprisonment	Ephesians	Rome	60-62 A.D.	Acts 28:30
	Philippians	Rome	60-62 A.D.	
	Colossians	Rome	60-62 A.D.	
	Philemon	Rome	60-62 A.D.	
Between the 1st and 2nd Roman imprisonments	1 Timothy	Macedonia?	62-66 A.D.	After the Book of Acts
	Titus	Macedonia?	62-66 A.D.	
During the 2nd Roman imprisonment	2 Timothy	Rome	67 A.D.	After the Book of Acts

Paul had told Timothy to stay and teach in **Ephesus** when Paul went to **Macedonia** (1 Tim. 1:3). During the third journey, Paul had done the opposite, staying in Ephesus himself, and sending Timothy with Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). So **First Timothy** was written around 64-65 AD during a period of liberty after Paul's Roman imprisonment of 61-63 AD. Paul said he was hoping to come to Timothy in Ephesus shortly, but may have to tarry long (1 Tim. 3:14-15). Timothy was in Ephesus where he received both 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3, 2 Tim. 1:16-18, 4:14, 4:19, Acts 19:33, and 1 Tim. 1:20).

Second Timothy was apparently written from prison (2 Tim. 1:8) with Paul ready to die (2 Tim. 4:6-8), possibly about 66 AD. Yet he asks Timothy to come to him before winter (2 Tim. 4:9 and 21). Paul was probably martyred sometime around 67 AD.

The Book of Ephesians will open up to us the Word of God to the Church of God. It is imperative that we have ears to hear. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to open our ears and eyes to the majesty of truth that we will encounter within the passages of holy write.

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