

## **Letter to Ephesians**

Ephesus was a port city located on the west coast of modern-day Turkey. It was known for its trade and extensive royal roads. Paul arrived in this city, which had a temple of Artemis and a Jewish colony, on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). The apostle spent two years in Ephesus during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8-10). Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Therefore, this letter is included in the prison letters.

Scholars believe that Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is a general letter. Ephesus is a familiar church community in the New Testament. Ephesus is the setting for Acts chapters 18 and 19. A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus (Acts 18:24). He knew only about the baptism of John (baptism by water). He did not know that there was a baptism in the Spirit (Acts 18:25). Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak. They took him aside and explained to him the way of God (about the baptism of the Spirit) more clearly. The Epistle to the Ephesians is a description of the conditions and results of the baptism in the Spirit. After Apollos, Paul comes to Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). There Paul clarifies the baptism in the Spirit. They become a good community. Many miracles and healings occur by the power of the Spirit. But after that, some crises come to Ephesus. Some people think about how to make a profit from these signs. Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, were doing this (Acts 19:14). This kind of abuse of spiritual gifts occurred in Ephesus.

### **The riot of the silversmiths (Acts 19:23-29).**

In Ephesus there was a great temple of Artemis. The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? (Acts 19, 35). The Ephesians were attracted to this deity. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there (Acts 19, 24). But when Paul taught against it, the silversmiths' trade declined. Paul taught that Christ is greater than Artemis. This is also the background of the church in Ephesus.

The setting of the letters to Timothy is the church at Ephesus: Paul is writing to Timothy, who was active in the church in Ephesus. 1 Timothy 1:3-7: Paul advises Timothy to remain in Ephesus to rebuke some.

The first of the letters to the churches in the book of Revelation is to the church in Ephesus: Revelation 2, 1-5

The letter to Ephesians clearly states that the author of the letter is Paul (1:1; 3:1, 7:13; 4:1; 6:19, 20). If so, it must have been written from Rome, where Paul was last imprisoned (AD 61-63) (Acts 28:16-30). The warm personal relationship that is evident in other letters is not evident here; however, the general structure of Paul's letters is visible in it.

A different liturgical style from the other letters (1,3-14; 1,15-23; 3,14-19), a new vision of the church (1,22.23; 2,11-22; 3,2-6; 4,1-6; 5,22.23), a different understanding of the coming of the Lord (3,21), a vision of the 'mystery' that is the divine plan (1,3-14; 3,1-14), the image of the church with a gentile

majority, the unity and universality of the church, and the representation of the Lordship of Jesus (1:22). The differences, as well as the developments in style and theology, favor the argument that it was later edited and revised by a disciple who knew Paul's mind intimately.

**1:1.2:** The greeting found at the beginning of the letters. Twenty-two of the thirty Greek words in these verses are also found in Col. 1:1.2.

**1:1: An apostle of Jesus Christ:** Jesus himself commissioned Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and to the Israelites (Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13, 14).

**who are in Ephesus:** This expression is not found in the 3rd century AD 46 and the important 4th century Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts. However, it is included in 5th century manuscripts.

**Saints:** Those who have been baptized and set apart for God (1 Cor 6:11). This name, common among the early Christians (Acts 9:13; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1), was given to the people of Israel in the Old Testament (Ex 19:6; Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26). The term 'saints', which is used only in the plural in Paul's letters, refers to all believers.

**1,2: Grace and peace:** 1 Cor 1,3.

**Father:** The main title given to God in the Epistles (1,3.17; 2,18; 3,14; 4,6; 5,20; 6,23). God is the Father of Jesus and of believers (cf. Rom 8,14-17; Gal 4,4-7).

**1, 3-14:** In the Greek original, these twelve verses are a single sentence. This passage is a single, complex sentence in the original Greek, often called the "greatest sentence ever written" (longest sentence in the Greek New Testament) and functioning as an extended praise to God (a doxology).

**1,3-10** is used in the liturgy as a New Testament hymn. Although Paul's letters usually continue with thanksgiving after the greetings, here is a hymn of praise to God. (cf. 2 Cor 1:3.4; 1 Pet 1:3-12). These hymns are similar to the Jewish Berakah (blessings - 1 Chron 29:10-13; Tobit 13:1-18; Dan 3:3-68) and the Hodayot (song of praise) of Qumran. Paul's blessings are centered on the Holy Trinity: the Father chooses us (1:4), the Son redeems us (1:7), and the Holy Spirit seals us (1:13).

**1,3:** In heaven: The usual term 'ouranoi' (heaven) is replaced by 'epurineia' (heavenly places) in this letter to Ephesians (1,3.20; 2,6; 3,10; 6,12).

**With all spiritual blessings:** This refers to the fullness of salvation that God provides (cf. Gen. 49,25).

**In Christ:** A description of union with Jesus through grace. Christ is the head of the body, the church (1:22, 23; 2:16; 5:23).

**Blessed be the God:** A hymn in the traditional Jewish style (1 Kings 8:15, 56; Luke 1:66-75).

**1, 4: Holy and blameless:** the perfection that God wants to see in his children (5,27; Col 1,22). In the Old Testament, 'holy' means 'set apart' for God, and 'blameless' means 'without blemish', 'worthy of sacrifice' (Leviticus 1:3, 10). These are only shadows of the Christian call to present ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice to the Father (cf. Rom 12:1; Eph 5:2). 1Cor 1,1.

**1,6: In the beloved ( In greek *Ēgapēmenō*):** a special title given to Christ (Mark 1,11; Col 1,13).

**1,7 Redemption: The ransom (greek word 'apoluthrosis':** Septuagint Ex 21,8; Dan 4,34) to free a slave or prisoner. God rescued Israel from Egypt and made them his people (Ex 15:16; Ps 74:2). When Christ frees us from the slavery of sin, we too become participants in a new spiritual exodus (Rom 6:15-18).

**we have:** The present tense greek verb 'ekhomen' means that Jesus remains the source of salvation from sin for believers.

**1:8: With wisdom and Insight:** In the Old Testament, wisdom and insight are the qualities of those who keep the commandments and pay attention to divine revelation (Proverbs 1:2-7; 2:2-10; Psalm 37:30.31).

**1,10: Plan:** The original meaning of the Greek word 'oikonomia' is to take care of a house or city. When connected to God, it refers to the direction of everything in the universe under God's care.

**1,11 obtained an inheritance:** The Greek word used here, 'kleronomeo', literally means to receive an inheritance. This evokes the idea that Israel is God's inheritance (Num 9, 29). This term is used to describe the Essenes (1 QS 4,26; 11,7).

**1,13 marked with the seal (greek word esphragisthete):** Sealing was a sign of ownership and protection in ancient societies (4:30; Eze 9:4-6; Rev 7:4). So too is the seal of the Holy Spirit (Cf - 2 Cor 1:22).

**1,14: the pledge :** The Greek word 'arabon' from the Hebrew means 'first installment' (Genesis 38,17.18). The Holy Spirit, which we receive in baptism, is the first installment, or foretaste, of the eternal life and blessings we will experience in heaven (2 Cor 1:22).

**1,15-23:** These sentences are a single sentence in the Greek original.

1, 15 The phrase 'and your love for all the saints' is not in some original manuscripts.

**I have heard:** This indicates that Paul was unlikely to have seen this community in person (Cf. 4:21).

**1:17: Father of glory:** This unusual expression is found in Psalm 29:3. In 1 Corinthians 2:8, Paul describes Jesus as the 'Lord of glory'.

**1, 20: seated him at his right hand:** This is a sign of royal authority and sovereignty. Christ, who reigns with the Father, has authority over the entire universe (Mark 16, 19). Paul here refers to Psalm 110:1, which describes the heavenly coronation and enthronement of the Messiah. This is also the most frequently quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament (Matthew 22:44; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13).

**1,20 authority and power and dominion....:** The names given here are the traditional names given in the Judeo-Christian tradition to the various orders of angels (Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 2:15; 1 Pet 3:22). Paul is indicating here that God exalted Christ above all creation, visible and invisible.

**2, 6 By grace:** The greek word 'kharis' means God's favor and the life he gives. Grace (2 Cor 8).

**Being saved:** The Greek word *sesōsmenoi* refers to freedom from sin and spiritual death (2:1-3).

**2, 10 has made us:** The Greek word 'poiema' refers to creation (Septuagint Ps 142:5), which is the work of God in the seventh sense (cf. Rom 1:20).

**2, 11 Gentiles (from the Hebrew word *ethne*):** an adjective for Uncircumcised who were denied the covenant blessings of Israel (2:12; Romans 9:4-6).

**2,12: Without God :** greek word 'Atheoi' (without God) means that the Gentiles are ignorant of God (Septuagint - Jer 10,25; 1 Thess 1,9; 4,5; Gal 4,8).

**2:14: peace (greek word *eirēnē*):** Isaiah describes the Messiah as the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). In the Old Testament, peace (*shalom*) is comprehensive well-being.

**The dividing wall (*mesotoichon tou phragmou*):** The wall that separated the outer courtyard for the Gentiles from the inner courtyard for the Israelites in the temple in Jerusalem. There were warnings at the entrance gates that Gentiles who entered would be punished by death. This wall also signifies that the Israelites must stay away from the idolatry and immoral ways of the Gentiles (Leviticus 20:26). Christ, however, destroyed this wall of separation and united Jews and Gentiles (2:15; Romans 15:7-12; Galatians 3:28).

**2:17: To you who are far off:** In the Old Testament, the Gentiles are called far off (Greek word *makran*) Deut 28:49; 1 Kings 8:41; Isa 5:26; Jer 5:15. This refers to spiritual distance from God.

**Proclaimed peace:** Paul here quotes in his own words the verse from Isaiah 57:19, which proclaims peace to Israel, who is close to God, and to the Gentiles, who are far from God.

**2,20 Cornerstone (Greek word *akrogōniaiou*):** This stone, laid first when building a new temple, is part of the foundation according to Jewish architecture. Christ is seen as the cornerstone of the unchangeable foundation of the church (1 Cor 3:11).

**3,1: Paul the prisoner:** Paul was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28,16.30).

**3, 2: Commission of God:** 'Oikonomia' refers to the servant faithfully managing all household affairs, including finances, for his master. Paul, the steward of the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1), is chosen to administer all the affairs of the church (1 Tim 3:1).

**3,3: The word 'mystery' ('*mysterion*') is used six times in the Epistle to the Ephesians and 22 times in other New Testament passages. Just as Jesus revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God through parables (Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11), Paul admonishes his readers about God's mysterious plan to be revealed under Christ's reign. (Rom 16,25; 1 Cor 15,51; Ephe 5,32; Col 2,2; 1 Tim 3,16). The source of this idea may be the references to the 'mystery' in the book of Daniel (Daniel 2:18, 19, 27-30, 47). Explaining the mystery of a dream that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had, Daniel reveals that the king had a dream of a huge human statue that represented all the empires of this world. Then, the king**

who received the kingdom from God is the head of this image (Daniel 2:37,38), and it is prophesied that this image will be destroyed and the Messianic kingdom will be established in its place. The theme of the Epistle to the Ephesians is the mystery of this kingdom (Eph 1:9; 3:4,9). The mystery of the Church, the body of which Christ is the head, is here described.

**3,7: As a servant:** 'servant of the gospel' is also found in Col 1,23. The Greek term 'diakonos' is also used to refer to ministers in local churches (Rom 16,1; Phil 1,1).

**3,8:** In the Greek original, 3,8-12 are a single sentence. And also, 3,14-19.

**3,9:** The word 'for everyone' is missing in some original manuscripts.

**3:12: Boldness (Greek word 'paresia'):** Boldness in speech is for the wise (1 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 3:12). This also indicates the blessing of approaching God in prayer.

**3, 14 Bow my knees:** This is a sign of submission and worship (Psalm 95, 6; Acts 7,60; 9,40; 20,36).

**4:1-6,20:** Paul concludes his theological exposition (chapters 1-3) with exhortations (chapters 4-6). This means that the actions of believers come from their faith. There are 36 imperative verbs in the Greek root. In this passage too, we find long sentences in the Greek original: 4,1-6, 4,11-16, 4,17-19, 4,20-24, 5,7-14, 5,18-21, 5,25-27, 5,28-30, and 6,14-20 are all single sentences in the Greek original.

**4:2,3:** The virtues referred to here are found in Galatians 5:22,23 and Colossians 3:12,13.

**4,2 Patience (In Greek makrothumias):** In the Judeo-Christian traditions, this virtue is seen in both God (Jer 15,15; Rom 2,4; 9,22; 1 Tim 1,16; 1 Pet 3,20) and in men (Prov 25,15; 2 Cor 6,6; Gal 5,22).

**4,8: When he ascended on high:** This quote is from Psalm 68,18. Psalm 68, about the Israelites being led out of Egypt to Mount Zion in Jerusalem, is also, in Paul's view, a vision of Jesus' ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem (Col 2:15). Then it also refers to the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Christ to the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4).

**4,11: Shepherds (In Greek poimenas):** This is how the elders of the churches in Asia Minor are called (1 Peter 5,1-5; Acts 20,28).

**4:24: to clothe (in Greek endysasthai):** The apostles immediately after baptism refer to putting on white garments. In figurative language, Paul calls for changing sinful lifestyles and putting on Christ (good things) (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27).

**4:25: Putting away falsehood:** The Lord hates a lying tongue (Proverbs 6:16,17).

**4:26: be angry:** Not all anger is necessarily harmful or sinful (Psalm 119:53; Mark 2:5). However, if we do become angry, we should be reconciled immediately.

**5, 5 an idolater ( in Greek eidōlōlatrēs):** Whenever we love and desire the things of the world more than God, we make them into idols (Matthew 6:4; Colossians 3:5).

**5:10: Discern:** The Greek word 'dokimatsu' means that believers must seek to know what is right in each situation. Failure to do so will lead to divine punishment (1 Cor 11:28-32).

**5:11: expose :** The word 'elencho' means 'to expose'. This refers to God's judgment of evil (Lev 19:17; Prov 19:13-17; 1 Cor 14:24,25). Believers are also to expose wrongdoing in order to bring about good.

**5:16: Make the most of the time:** The word 'exagoratsō' literally means 'to buy the time'. In the days of evil, Paul advises us to make the most of the time wisely (cf. Col 4,5).

**5:18: Do not get drunk:** This commandment is from Proverbs 23:31. While drunkenness opens the door to all kinds of immorality (Proverbs 20:1), sobriety helps to walk in the spirit (Romans 8:5-11).

**5:27: Spot or wrinkle:** metaphor for cleaned clothes.

**5:30:** Some ancient manuscripts add 'of his flesh and of his bones'.

**5:31:** And the two shall become one flesh: a quotation from Genesis 2,24.

**5:32:** Mystery: Greek word 'mysterion' in this text refers to the mysterious plan of God (1,9; 3,3; 4,9; 6,19). Marriage is the earthly symbol of the heavenly union between Christ and the Church.

**6,2: Honor your father...:** Quote from Deut 5,16. This is the fourth of the Ten Commandments and the first of those concerning love of neighbor. Those who keep this commandment will enjoy prosperity and long life (Eph 6:3; Prov 3:1-16). In ancient Israel, rebellion against one's parents was considered a crime worthy of death (Ex 21:17; Deut 21:16-21).

**6:10-17:** This is a general call to prayer and spiritual warfare. Christians are compared to Roman soldiers wearing armor (cf. Is 11:5; 59:16-17; Wisdom 5:17-23). Their struggle is with the spiritual forces of evil (Rev. 1:21; 2:2; 3:10). Although Christ defeated the forces of evil through his death on the cross (Col. 2:15), their presence in the world continues until he returns and completely destroys them (1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 20:10).

**6,12: flesh and blood:** a Semitic term denoting human (Mt 16,17; 1 Cor 15,50).

**And to the authorities...:** The armies of demonic forces that oppose the Church.

**6,20: As an ambassador:** This letter was probably written while Paul was in prison in Rome (Acts 28,16). Paul, who had the freedom to preach the gospel to those who came to him (Acts 28:23, 31), asks for prayers for himself so that he may be bold enough to preach the gospel (6:19). Ambassador (2 Cor 5:20)

**6,21: Tychicus:** The co-preacher who carried this letter of Paul and the Epistle to the Colossians (Col 4,7,8; 2 Tim 4,12,13). If this is the same person mentioned in Acts 20:4, he would have been familiar with Ephesus and Colossae in Asia Minor (southwestern Turkey).