

Ephesians: The Purpose and Plan of God

January 31st & February 1st, 2015

Ephesians 1:1-2

“A quartet of men left Rome in the year A.D.62, bound for the province of Asia, which was located in what is currently designated as Asia Minor. These men had on their persons four of the most sublime compositions of the Christian faith... When they bade farewell to the Apostle Paul, each was given an epistle to bear to his particular constituency. These four letters are designated ‘The Prison Epistles of Paul’, since he wrote them while imprisoned in Rome... The quartet of men and their respective places of abode can be identified:

1. Epaphroditus from Philippi (Phil.4:18) had the Epistle to the Philippians.
2. Tychicus from Ephesus (Eph.6:21) had the Epistle to the Ephesians.
3. Epaphras from Colosse (Col.4:12) had the Epistle to the Colossians.
4. Onesimus, a slave from Colosse (Philemon 10) had the Epistle to Philemon (who was his master)

These epistles present a composite picture of Christ, the Church, and the Christian life...”¹

Ephesus

“Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia on the west coast of Asia minor. It lay between the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire and was among the top five cities of the empire in the first century.”²

f Ephesus itself was a gateway to Asia with a population of 250,000 people. It was at the mouth of the important Cayster River, and waterways were crucial links of transportation and commerce. A highway to Ephesus also served as a hub for caravan travel.

f Ephesus was famous for its great temple, a shrine to the goddess Diana (Artemis in Greek). The temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

f A stadium was built near the temple during the reign of Nero (AD 54-68) coinciding with Paul’s visit (AD 53- 56). The stadium had a seating capacity of about 25,000 people. This stadium was the scene of the riot against Paul and his friends.

f Ephesus was also known as a center of occult arts and practices.

- Information taken from R.C. Sproul’s *An Exposition of Ephesians* ³

❖ The Ephesian letter was to the saints in Ephesus – A large city but one church!

Church: (*Greek – Ekklesia*) the assembly or called out ones.⁴

The Beginning of the Church in Ephesus Acts 19:1-10

❖ The Call of God

Acts 13:47 “For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

♦ Paul was called by God to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.

f His first missionary journey was from Antioch (*Acts 13:3*) and he was with Barnabas; they were sent out by the Holy Spirit (*Acts 13:4*).

f His second missionary journey was from Jerusalem. He was with Silas and they were brought to Ephesus (*Acts 15:40*); they were led by the Holy Spirit (*Acts 16:6-10*).

❖ The Supernatural Power of God *Acts 19:2-12*

♦ The Holy Spirit came on the twelve men at Ephesus.

f Jesus promised that His disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. *Acts 1:4-8*

“The experience the Ephesian Gentiles had when receiving the Holy Spirit parallels that of the Jews (2:4,11), Samaritans (8:14-17), and God-fearing Gentiles (10:44-46). The episode is an extension of the Pentecost experience to yet another group of people...”²

♦ The power of the Holy Spirit on these 12 men was the beginning of the church in Ephesus!

♦ God did extraordinary miracles through Paul

f Jesus promised that these things would take place! *John 14:11-14*

❖ The Fear of God *Acts 19:13-19*

♦ The Sons of Sceva learned that their “religious” approach to dealing with demons was no match against this evil spirit.

♦ The true power of God over evil spirits became known and the fear of God fell upon the people!

♦ The result was that the people extolled the name of the Lord!

♦ Repentance was the mark of true conversions!

“The Word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily!” Acts 19:20

The Church in Ephesus was born!

Endnotes:

¹ Willmington, H. L. *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1981. Print.

² Sproul, R.C. *The Reformation Study Bible*. Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 2005. Print.

³ Sproul, R. C. *The Purpose of God: Ephesians*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1994. Print.

⁴ Vine, W.E. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997.

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