

Key to EPHESIANS

1. BACKGROUND:

The writer is Paul, the time probably A.D. 62. Place of writing is Rome. Ephesians is one of the "prison epistles," i.e., written while Paul was imprisoned.

Ephesus was an important city in Asia Minor. It had a theater that seated 50,000; its temple to Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world. Paul had visited there and stayed about 3 years, having an immense ministry among those people (Acts 19:10). Ephesus was the scene of much conflict. Paul relates that it was there that he had "**fought with beasts**" (I Corinthians 15:32), there he had almost lost his life in the riot (Acts 20:1), yet loved the people dearly.

2. THEME:

The subject is "the Church of which CHRIST is the Head." The important words are: "unity," "oneness," "in CHRIST," "edify." This is the most impersonal of all of Paul's writings. Paul seems not to be so much concerned about the local church as he is about the universal, true Church or the Body of CHRIST. The most profound, sublime truth of the New Testament is here. Absent is the practical. Present is the Heavenly, all transcendent, universal truth.

3. MAIN DIVISIONS:

You may think of Ephesians in this way: What GOD has done for us (1-3); What we may do for GOD (4-6). Or, by chapters: Boundless (1); limitless (2); measureless (3); fathomless (4); faultless (5); dauntless (6).

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Some have thought this a circular letter to many churches round about Ephesus.

In the first three chapters there is not one exhortation. All that is there tells of GOD's limitless grace extended in the saint's behalf. Note the past tense used frequently. There is a close relationship between Ephesians and the book of Joshua.

The O.T. book illustrates the N.T. truth showing that in the Christian life there is conflict and often failure; but eventual victory, rest, and possession. The number "seven" is conspicuous in the structure.

In this letter, as in no other place in the Bible, do we find the broad outline of the plan of GOD for all time (1:10; 2:7).

5. OUTLINE:

Introduction (1)
Divine Origin
Chosen, Redeemed (1)

Enlightened, Human Inability (2)
Spiritual Construction (2)
Gentile Constituency (3)
Rules of Conduct
Charity, Unity (4)
Purity, Family (4; 5)
Rules for Conflict (6)
Conclusion (6)

6. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS

The highly exalted position of the simple believer in CHRIST is stressed by the use of the past tense to indicate accomplishment as "**hath blessed**" (1:3); "**hath chosen**" (1:4); "**having predestinated**" (1:5); etc.

Two lovely prayers right from the apostle's heart are seen in 1:15-23; 3:14-21. These may well be emulated by Spirit-taught believers today.

The doctrine of salvation, by grace through faith plus nothing, clearly portrayed in 2:8, 9.

The true character of peace showing it to be a Person, not a state of mind, is taught in 2:13.

The hopeless condition of the Gentile previous to the cross of CHRIST is graphically portrayed in verses 11 through 13 of chapter 2.

The true source of the believer's success is in being "**filled with the Spirit**" as exhorted in 5:18.

The order of the Christian life is illustrated here.

First, GOD, for CHRIST's sake had already done amazing, eternal things for us. Now, if we care to, we may serve Him according to chapters 4-6.

7. KEY:

This is the "**holiest of all**." Read it on your knees, and don't restrain the tears of gratitude that may come. Remember, it's for you - even though just a new believer. This is GOD's plan, and GOD will bring it to pass in your life; if you'll allow Him.

~ end of Ephesians ~

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