

11-2017

Article 49: Ephesians at a Glance

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Article 49: Ephesians at a Glance" (2017). *The Owner's Manual File*. 63.
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EPHESIANS AT A GLANCE

This book depicts the six-fold role and relationship in regard to the Church.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

SIX STRIKING SYMBOLS DESCRIBING THAT PRECIOUS INSTITUTION JESUS PROMISED TO BUILD IN MATTHEW 16.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Paul.** He was also known as Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:11). This relentless enemy of Christians (Acts 8:3; 22:5, 19; 26:11; Gal. 1:13) would, following his conversion (Acts 9:3-9), become the greatest missionary, church planter, soul winner, and theologian in church history, authoring nearly half of the New Testament books!
2. What? The books of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
3. When and where?
4. Why and to whom? To provide the most detailed background overview of the church in the entire Bible. Written to the church at Ephesus.

KEY EVENTS

1. The church is likened to a body
2. The church is likened to a temple
3. The church is likened to a mystery
4. The church is likened to a new creation
5. The church is likened to a bride
6. The church is likened to a soldier

KEY INDIVIDUALS

- **Paul,** author of Ephesians and at least 12 other New Testament books, church planter, evangelist, missionary, and perhaps the greatest of all the apostles
- **Tychicus,** a man whom Paul described as a beloved brother (Eph. 6:21), a faithful minister (Eph. 6:21), and a fellow servant (Col. 4:7), who accompanied the apostle during his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4).

KEY PLACES

- **Ephesus:** capital city of the Roman province of Asia. Paul wrote the Book of Ephesians to the church he founded there while a political prisoner in Rome.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. As has been already noted, this book depicts the six-fold role of the church, likening it to a body (of which Christ is the head), a temple (of which Christ is the cornerstone) a mystery (revealing God's plan to join both Jews and Gentiles into the body of Christ), a new man (created to be like God Himself in matters of righteousness and holiness), a bride (to be now in submission to her future bridegroom who has assured her eternal perfection), and a soldier (to put on the full armor of God and stand for the truth against the fury of the foe).
2. It has more about the doctrines of election and predestination than any other book for its size (1:3-11).
3. It offers the key reason for our salvation (2:7).
4. It tells us both our salvation and service for God have been foreordained (2:8-10).
5. Ephesians records the second of two occasions when Paul employs the Greek word, *poiema*, from whence we get our English word, *poem*.
 - In Rom. 1:20 it is translated "the things that are made," referring to the divine work of creation.
 - In Eph. 2:10 it is rendered, "workmanship," referring to the divine work of redemption.
 - Thus, the bottom line is God has two glorious *poems*, that of CREATION, and that of REDEMPTION!
6. Ephesians provides for us the most concise purpose for the spiritual gifts (4:11-16).
7. Two of the four occasions where the word *dispensation* is used (referring to God's various time programs for human beings) is found in Eph. (1:10; 3:2).
8. Paul's self description of being "an ambassador in bonds" is found only in Eph. (6:20).
9. The shortest definition of a Christian is simply one who is "IN CHRIST," a phrase found no less than 35 times in Ephesians, more than any other biblical book.
10. The word MYSTERY is found more often in this book than in any other (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19).
11. The person and work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned no less than 13 times in Ephesians (1:13, 17; 2:18, 22; 3:5, 16; 4:3, 4, 30; 5:9, 18; 6:17, 18).
12. Ephesians addresses no specific church problem.
13. It is one of the least personal of Paul's letters. There is almost no personal greeting, and only two personal names appear: Paul and Tychicus.
14. In the original Greek, 1:3-14 is the longest sentence in the Bible.
15. The phrase "in the heavenly realms" occurs five times here (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12), and nowhere else in Scripture.
16. This church had more famous preachers than did any other church. This would include men such as Paul, Apollos, John, and Timothy.
17. Ephesians is the Joshua book of the New Testament.
18. It has been called "Paul's third heaven epistle." It has been referred to as the Alps of the New Testament, the Mount Whitney of the High Sierras of all Scripture.
19. In no other epistle is our pre-conversion position in the world and post-conversion in Christ so vividly described as in this book.
 - Our pre-conversion position (2:1-3, 11-13)
 - Our post-conversion position (1:3-14; 2:4-10, 14-22)

20. Ephesians provides the most beautiful New Testament passages describing Christ's relationship to and love for his church. (See 5:22-33.)
21. It is thought that this epistle may be the one referred to by Paul in Col. 4:16.
22. It gives the most detailed description and presentation of the believer as a soldier of Jesus (6:11-17).
23. Two of Paul's greatest prayers for the church are found in this book (1:15-18; 3:14-21).
24. It includes the last of three New Testament passages speaking of spiritual gifts (4:11). Compare with Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31.
25. Ephesus is the only New Testament church to receive a letter from more than one Bible writer. John the apostle also had a message for them (Rev. 2:1-7).
26. According to John's letter (Rev. 2:1-7), this church:
 - Worked hard and possessed patience
 - Had high church standards
 - Hated the deeds of the licentious Nicolaitanes
 - Had left their first love
 - Needed to repent and return to Christ
27. The Ephesian church was founded by Paul during his second missionary trip.
 - After spending 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:11), he visited Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:18).
 - Paul stayed there for only a short time, but promised to return (Acts 18:19-21).
 - Aquila and Priscilla remained in Ephesus where God led them to instruct a powerful Bible preacher named Apollos in the details of the Word of God (Acts 18:24-26).
 - Paul returned during his third missionary trip and stayed three years (Acts 19:8-10; 20:31).
 - He is later visited by the Ephesian elders during a layover at Miletus, en route to Jerusalem (Acts 20:16-38).
28. Note J. Vernon McGee's introduction to this book of Ephesians: "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. These precious documents would be invaluable if they were in existence today. Rome did not comprehend the significance of the writings of an unknown prisoner. If she had, these men would have been apprehended and the documents seized. 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, awaiting a hearing before Nero, the Caesar at that time, to whom Paul, as a Roman citizen, had appealed his case."

This quartet of men and their respective places of abode can be identified as:

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

“These epistles present a composite picture of Christ, the Church, the Christian life, and the interrelationship and functioning of all. These different facets present the Christian life on the highest plane. Ephesians presents the church ‘which is his body’ (Eph. 1:22-23)—this is the invisible church, of which Christ is the Head. Colossians presents Christ, ‘the head of the body, the church’ (Col. 1:18). The emphasis is upon Christ, rather than on the church. Philippians presents Christian living with Christ as the dynamic—*‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me’* (Phil. 4:13). Philemon presents Christian living in action in a pagan society: *‘If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account’* (Philem. 17-18). The gospel walked in shoe leather in the first century—it worked” (*Exploring Through Ephesians*, p. 3).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

1. **Joshua:**

- Joshua deals with the conquest and possession of the Promised Land, the “earthly realms;” Ephesians deals with our taking possession of our promised “heavenly realms.”

2. **Colossians:**

- The content of 78 of the 155 verses in Ephesians is repeated in Colossians with only slight differences; 78 out of the 95 verses in Colossians resemble Ephesians.
- Both were written by the same author—Paul.
- Both were written during the same period of time.
- Both are prison epistles.
- Ephesians emphasizes the body of Christ, which is the church.
- Colossians emphasizes the head of that body, which is Christ himself.
- Both exhort the believer to offer up songs of praise (5:19, 20; Col. 3:16, 17).

3. **Second Timothy:**

- Ephesians was written during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment.
- Second Timothy was written during Paul’s final Roman imprisonment.

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. Jesus Christ (1:1a)
2. Christ Jesus (1:1b)
3. Lord Jesus Christ (1:2)
4. The name above all names (1:21)
5. Son of God (4:13)
6. Head of the church (5:23)
7. Loving bridegroom (5:25-33)
8. Master (6:9)