

THE  
GLORIOUS CHURCH

*A Study of Ephesians*



BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK

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THE  
GLORIOUS CHURCH

*A Study of Ephesians*

by

Wilbur Fields

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*To*  
*My Mother*



# THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

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## INTRODUCTION

There are several features in this book that will make it helpful to you.

(1) *The entire text of Ephesians* is given in the American Standard Revised Version of 1901 A.R.V. This is a very accurate translation of the original Greek text.

(2) *Outlines and charts* on every chapter and many smaller sections are included. These will be very helpful in teaching the book and in studying it.

(3) *Numerous illustrations* are included that will help to make the message of Ephesians more vivid.

(4) *Over four hundred thought questions* on the text are given. By the aid of these questions, you should be able to think out the meaning of nearly every verse and important thought in the book. Most of these questions can be answered with no help except for the Bible itself.

(5) *A paraphrase of every verse is given.* These serve as a brief commentary, and show the connection of nearly every verse with the verses preceding it. Often reading the paraphrase alone will bring out the meaning of the verse in a vivid way.

(6) *The notes are brief and concise.* They are designed to help both the advanced student of the Bible, and the average church worker. There is a lot of ammunition for teaching and preaching.

(7) *There are 340 fact questions,* which are mainly prepared to check your knowledge of exactly what the text says.

The study of Ephesians will be very rewarding to you. This book will guide you to an understanding of the "glorious church" about which Paul wrote in Ephesians. It will be a means for our perfecting "unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ."



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### I. CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. Exactly what is it that is so wonderful about Christianity? (1:18; 3:17-18)
2. How can living people be *dead* in sins? (2:1)
3. What are the seven things upon which the Spirit has united the church? (4:4-6)
4. What are the duties of wives to husbands, and husbands to wives? (5:22-23)
5. How can a Christian stand against the tricks of the devil? (6:11)

These questions, and many others, will be answered in our study of Ephesians.

Ephesians is "one of the divinest compositions of man" (Coleridge).

Ephesians is a letter about heavenly things. (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10)

Ephesians has more to say about the church than any other New Testament epistle. (See Section II below, "The Glorious Church in Ephesians.") Ephesians has been called "The Letter About the Church." For this reason, this book is entitled *The Glorious Church*.

"The Ephesian converts publicly burned their books of magic, in value 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). Truly, they were well recompensed when they received this letter, not to lead them into magic and sorcery, but into the mystery of Christ, and the hidden wisdom of God. They burned evil and superstitious volumes, and then obtained a letter which cannot be valued in silver and gold, an epistle of wonderful breadth and power, full of riches of the mind and the warm flow of a master spirit." (Fraser).

#### *Fact Questions*

1. Ephesians is described as a letter about what?
2. About what subject does Ephesians have more to say than any other New Testament epistle?

### II. THE GLORIOUS CHURCH IN EPHESIANS

The church is the most precious institution on earth today. Ephesians has more to say about the church than any other New Testament letter. We need to picture the church in our minds as the glorious church described in Ephesians.

The word *church* occurs nine times in the letter (1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32). The term *body* (referring to the church) occurs nine more times (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16 (twice); 5:23, 30).

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Consider the glorious church described in Ephesians:

1. *Christ loves her.* 5:23. Men may despise and belittle her, but Jesus Christ loves her.
2. *The church shall be presented to Christ.* 5:27. What will the people who are not in the church do then?
3. *God's wisdom is demonstrated by the church.* 3:10. If you are not in the church, God sent Christ to die all in vain, as far as you are concerned. You make God's mercy to appear to be foolishness.
4. *God is glorified in the church.* 3:20-21. Out in the world you cannot glorify Him.
5. *There is one body, one church.* 4:4. Because of the divisions among those who believe in Christ, the world does not believe that God sent Him. John 17:20-21. Pray to God that men will abandon their loyalty to denominations and sects and be members only of that glorious church to which God adds all saved people. Acts 2:47.
6. *Christ is the Head of the church.* 5:23; 1:22. Our opinion of the church will be just as high as our opinion of Christ.
7. *The church is the fullness of Christ.* 1:22-23. If we love Christ, we shall love the church, for it is filled by Christ.
8. *Christ is the Savior of the body.* 5:23. All saved people are members of the church. You cannot be saved and not be a member of the Lord's church.
9. *She shall be holy and without blemish.* 5:27. No man can excuse himself by saying, "There are too many hypocrites."
10. *The church is the beloved bride of Christ.* 5:31-32. Don't you want to be married to Jesus? What will the Lord do to those who hate and hurt His bride?

### III. EPHEBUS

In Paul's time, Ephesus was religiously like Rome, and commercially like New York.

The city lay in the Roman province of Asia, on the west end of what is now Turkey, about three miles from the coast, near the mouth of the Cayster River. It stood on the sloping sides of two hills and in the river valley between them.

A little city grew on the site in ancient times. Legend said that the mother-goddess of the earth was born there. And there her temple was built. The temple was burned and rebuilt seven times during the centuries, each time on a grander scale. Rich King Croesus even helped build one of the temples. In 356 B.C.,

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the night Alexander the Great was born, the temple burned. It was rebuilt to be one of the seven wonders of the world, and was there when Paul came to Ephesus.

The Cayster River valley extended far inland toward the east from Ephesus. It was connected by highways to the chief cities of the province. At Ephesus itself an artificial harbor was built, accessible even to the largest ships. Thus, Ephesus was the most accessible city of Asia, both from land and sea.

As ships came up the canal into Ephesus from the seacoast, the city could not be seen from a distance because of its position in the valley. But at a certain point, the city appeared, spread out before them, with its theater (seating 24,000) on the hillside and the temple of Diana on the lowlands.

Even in ancient times, however, engineers had trouble keeping the harbor and canal dredged of silt from the river.

Commerce flourished in Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila may have left Corinth for Ephesus (Acts 18:1, 2, 26) because Ephesus was famous for the manufacture of luxurious tents and marquees, as well as to prepare the way for Paul's ministry there.

Paul's labors in Ephesus turned many of the Ephesians from Diana. A substantial church flourished there. Timothy and the apostle John (probably) preached there. In 262 A.D. when the temple of Diana burned again, the influence of Diana had so weakened that it was never rebuilt again. A church council was held there in 341 A.D. The city declined. Many of its stone buildings were in ruins, and the stone was used elsewhere, some even in Santa Sophia church in Constantinople.

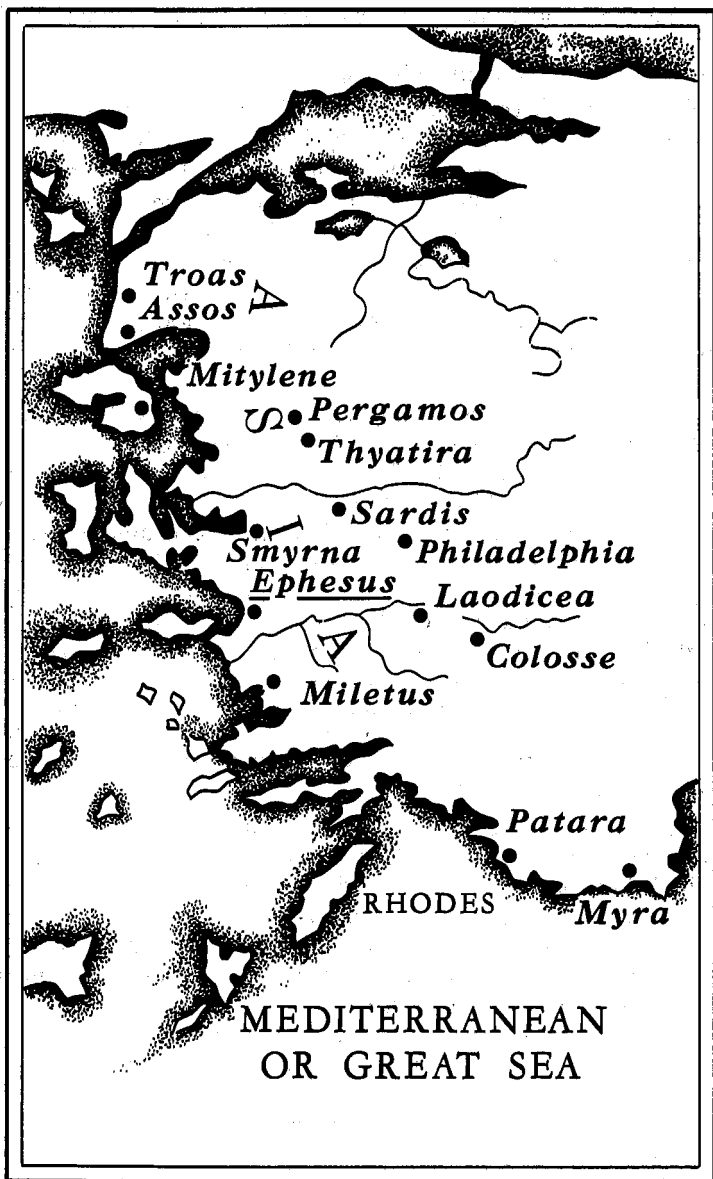
The Turks captured the city in 1308, murdering its inhabitants, destroying its remaining buildings. The Cayster River, overflowing its banks, buried the site of Diana's temple and the low part of the city under many feet of silt. There is no city at all on the site of Ephesus today. A Turkish village named Seljuk is about a mile from the site. Most of the buildings of Seljuk are made of stone from the ruins of Ephesus.

A most interesting account of a modern visit to Ephesus can be found in H. V. Morton's *In the Steps of St. Paul*.

### *Fact Questions*

3. Where is Ephesus located? By what river?
4. What religious legend helped the growth of Ephesus?
5. Why was Ephesus a most accessible city?
6. What is the status of modern Ephesus?

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A Map Showing Ephesus and  
Surrounding Territory

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### IV. DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS

At some time in the remote past the Assyrians or Babylonians in their vain imaginations conceived of a female deity, a mother goddess of the earth. They called her *Ishtar*. Other tribes and nations adopted the idea and borrowed some of the legends connected with her. But they often gave the goddess their own names and developed forms of worship and traditions of their own. Always, however, the worship was of man's own invention (not from God) and very vile. Her rituals included sacrifices and ceremonial prostitution.

The Cappadocians called her *Ma*, the Phoenicians, *Astarte*, the Phrygians, *Cybele*. In Egypt, she was *Isis*; in Asia (the province containing Ephesus) she was called *Diana*, or *Cybele*. The legends were started that (1) she was born in the woods near Ephesus, and that (2) there her image (of ebony wood) had fallen from the sky from Jupiter (also called *Jove* or *Dios*). Some speculate that originally she was a meteorite.

Later Ephesus fell to the Greeks, and the Greek and Asiatic civilizations blended. The Greeks believed in a virgin goddess called *Artemis*, the swift twin sister of Apollo, the goddess of chastity, the woods, and the hunt. The Greek name of *Artemis* was given to the dark Asiatic goddess. In fact, her name in the Greek New Testament is actually *Artemis*. Some of the Greek colonists in Asia represented the Ephesian Diana as Greek on their coins.

At first, the figures of Diana were crudely carved of wood. In later times, metal images were made, showing her with a head-dress representing a fortified city wall. The upper part of her body was covered with breasts to show that she was the mother of all life. (However, Sir William Ramsay believed that these "breasts" actually represented the ova of bees. The bee was the symbol of Ephesus, and is found on most of its coins. The temple staff included a crowd of priests or "drones" who dressed like women. Also there was a crowd of priestesses known as *Melissai*, who represented the worker bees. The goddess was the queen bee.) The lower part of her body was wrapped up like an Egyptian mummy. Later images show her with stags or lions, possibly

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because some associated her with the Greek goddess Artemis hunting. On most coins showing the goddess two lines run from her hands to the ground. These probably represent rods which were necessary to keep her in an erect position, because of her top-heavy shape.

The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was built on marshy ground, but uncommon pains were taken to give it a good foundation. It was 220 by 425 feet, with its roof supported on 107 pillars, each 60 feet high. It was nearly 220 years in the process of completion.

The temple of Diana was not only a place of worship, but a museum of the best statuary and painting. It owned valuable lands and controlled the fisheries. Its priests were the bankers of its enormous revenues. Because of its resources, the people stored money there for safe-keeping. It became to the ancient world practically all that the Federal Reserve system is to the United States.

An annual feast, called the *Artemisia*, attracted thousands of pilgrims to Ephesus from all parts of the world. No work was done for a month, while great crowds enjoyed a daily program of athletic games, plays, and sacrifices. Thousands of shrines of Diana were purchased by the visitors to take home as souvenirs or objects of veneration (Acts 19:24). These shrines were crude models of the temple with a female figure inside. They were made of clay, marble, or silver.

The worship of Diana may have contributed to the start of the worship of the Virgin Mary. It is a remarkable coincidence that one of the earliest churches in honor of Mary was built at Ephesus on the site of the famous temple of Diana, and that in that same city a synod (council) was held in 431 which first designated Mary as "Mother of God."

A frog pond now covers the site of Diana's temple, and a snowy water weed fills the pond. The site was discovered and excavated by J. T. Wood in 1870.

When we know something about dark Diana, we can better understand why Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Walk not as the other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ" Eph. 4:17-20.



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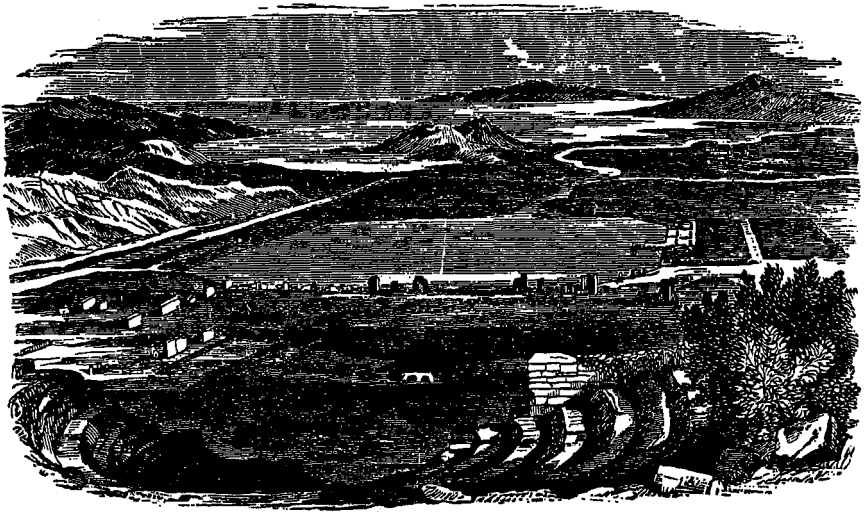
### *Fact Questions*

7. What nationalities were the first to worship a Diana-type mother goddess?
8. What were the two legends about Diana's relationship to Ephesus?
9. Who was the Greek goddess that became associated with Diana?
10. Approximately how large was Diana's temple?
11. Describe the shrines of Diana that were sold.
12. Why might we think that the worship of Diana contributed to the start of the worship of Mary?

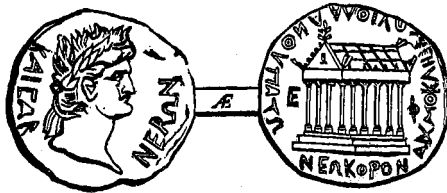


Diana.

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Site of Ephesus.



Coin of Ephesus, exhibiting the head of Nero and the Temple of Diana.

The same word, *neokoros*, is used on this coin to describe Ephesus as is used in Acts 19:35, where it is translated (in A. R. V.) "temple keeper".

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### V. PAUL'S WORK AT EPHEBUS

(Read all Scriptures)

1. *Brief visit* during the closing portion of his second missionary journey (A.D. 53) Acts 18:18-21.
2. *Main ministry in Ephesus*: (lasted three years, A.D. 54-57) Acts 20:31; 19:1-20:1.
  1. Paul baptizes twelve disciples. 19:1-7.
  2. Paul preaches three months in the synagogue. 19:8.
  3. Paul preaches in the school of Tyrannus. 19:9-10a.
  4. All Asia hears the word of God. 19:10b; cp. Rom. 16:5.
  5. Paul works special miracles. 19:11-12.
  6. The sons of Sceva fail to duplicate Paul's miracles. 19:13-17.
  7. Magic books are burned and the Word prevails. 19:18-20.
  8. I Corinthians and possibly Galatians written at Ephesus.
  9. Paul sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia. 19:21-22.
10. Demetrius stirs up the silversmiths against Paul. 19:23-28.
11. Riot at the theater. 19:29-34.
12. The town clerk quiets the riot. 19:35-41.
13. Paul departs. 20:1.
3. *Farewell message to the Ephesian elders* (at Miletus), (A.D. 58, closing portion of the third missionary journey.) Acts 20:17-38.

Paul was arrested at Jerusalem (A.D. 58) when Jews from Asia (Ephesus probably) falsely accused him. Acts 21:27-29.

#### *Fact Questions*

13. On what missionary journey did Paul first visit Ephesus?
14. How long did he remain there on that occasion?
15. On what missionary journey did Paul spend most of his time in Ephesus?
16. How long was Paul's main ministry in Ephesus?
17. What was the extent of Paul's success in Asia?
18. What writings did Paul write at Ephesus?
19. Who stirred up the riot against Paul in Ephesus?
20. At what place did Paul give his farewell message to the elders of Ephesus?

### VI. VITAL FACTS ABOUT EPHESIANS

1. Who wrote Ephesians? Paul the apostle.
2. To whom was it sent?

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- (1) To the saints at Ephesus.
- (2) To the faithful in Christ Jesus.
3. Where was it written? Rome.
4. When was it written? About A.D. 63, during Paul's first imprisonment.
5. Who delivered the letter? Tychicus (pronounced TICKY-kuss).

Evidently Tychicus delivered the epistle to the Colossians at the same time. Col. 4:7. He traveled with Onesimus (Oh-NESS-i-muss), whose master, Philemon (Fy-LEE-mon), lived at Colossae (Ko-LOSS-ee); see Colossians 4:7-9; Phil-emon 2. Onesimus bore a letter to his master Philemon.

### *Memory Work*

Ephesians is a lofty letter, full of inspiration and grandeur. The entire epistle deserves to be memorized.

Passages that should by all means be committed to memory are 1:22-23; 2:8-10, 20; 3:10; 3:20-21; 4:4-6, 32; 5:25-27; 6:10-17.

### *Fact Questions*

21. What was the date when Ephesians was written?
22. Who wrote Ephesians?
23. Where was Paul when he wrote it? What were his circumstances?
24. Who delivered the letter?
25. What other letters were dispatched at the same time?

## VII. WAS EPHESIANS REALLY WRITTEN TO THE EPHESIANS?

There has been much discussion among scholars for many centuries over whether Ephesians was actually written to the Ephesians, or whether it was a circulating letter sent around to all the churches in the province of Asia.

Actually, the first verse of the letter answers the question. It was sent BOTH to the *saints which are at Ephesus* AND to the *faithful in Christ Jesus*. Obviously it was primarily and first sent to Ephesus, but was intended to be circulated around to the brethren elsewhere. This simple explanation clears up all the questions that have been raised about the matter.

There are practically no personal references in Ephesians, such as are common in Paul's other epistles. They are omitted

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because those who read (or heard) the letter, but did not know Paul personally, would not be interested in the personal references. Those who did know Paul could find out from Tychicus all about Paul's affairs. In fact Tychicus was sent with the letter for that very purpose (Eph. 6:21-22).

It appears to us that the Epistle to the Ephesians was indeed first sent to Ephesus. Then a number of copies seem to have been prepared to be circulated around. In some of these copies the words *at Ephesus* (in 1:1) were omitted; conceivably the name of other cities could have been inserted.

Thus in the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts of the Bible (fourth century) and Papyrus 46 (third century) we do not find the words *at Ephesus* in 1:1. Basil (about 370 A.D.) tells us that the text without the words *at Ephesus* is "the way it was handed down to us by our predecessors, and so we ourselves have found it in the old copies." Origen (about 225 A.D.) wrote: "In the Ephesians alone, we find the expression, 'To the saints which are,' and we ask, unless the phrase *which are* is redundant, what can it mean?" It is most improbable that Paul would write *to the saints which are* without adding the name of some place. But thus the phrase stood in the copy seen by Origen.

However, when all the ancient manuscripts of Ephesians are checked, we find that the majority of them include the words *at Ephesus*. Also all of the ancient translations of the Bible (Latin, Syriac, etc.) have the words *at Ephesus*, and these translations must have been made from manuscripts older than any we now have. Furthermore, many of the Christian scholars of the first four centuries quoted from Ephesians, indicating that that was the title by which they were familiar with the epistle. Different people had simply seen different copies.

Some have speculated that the "epistle from Laodicea" (mentioned in Col. 4:16) may have been a copy of Ephesians. This can never be anything but a guess (and a very doubtful guess in our opinion). Tertullian (about 190 A.D.) said, "I say nothing here about another epistle which we have under the heading *to the Ephesians*, but the heretic (Marcion) *to the Laodiceans*. According to the true belief of the church we hold this epistle to have been dispatched to the Ephesians, not to the Laodiceans; but Marcion had to falsify its title, wishing to make himself out a very diligent investigator."

(*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

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### *Fact Questions*

26. To what two groups of people is Ephesians addressed?
27. Why are there few personal references in Ephesians?
28. How can we account for the fact that some ancient manuscripts omit the words *at Ephesus* from 1:1?
29. Is the "epistle from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16) the same as Ephesians?

### VIII. DID PAUL WRITE EPHESIANS?

All the ancient manuscripts and versions of the Bible agree in stating that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians. All the Christian writers of the early centuries agree to this.

However, down through the years some critics have dared to assert that Paul did not write it. One recent doubter is F. W. Beare in the *Interpreter's Bible*. The arguments advanced by Mr. Beare against Paul's authorship are not arguments based upon external evidence. This is all in favor of Paul. They are based upon his own conceptions of what Paul believed and could have written or not written.

How could any man living in the twentieth century be better qualified to be a judge of what Paul could have written in the first century than the Christian scholars who lived in the centuries near to the time of Paul? These men had no doubts that Paul wrote Ephesians. Do we know Paul better than they? It is most unlikely.

To assert that Paul did not write Ephesians leads to some far-reaching conclusions. If Paul did not write it, it is a forgery, even if it be called a "pious forgery." A forgery is a form of lie. If, then, Ephesians contains a lie as to who wrote it, it cannot be inspired of God, for God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). If Ephesians is not inspired of God, it is only human wisdom, and is just as likely to contain untruths as any other book written by human wisdom alone. This we cannot accept for one second.

We are informed that there are 82 words found in Ephesians that are not found in any other of Paul's writings. This is supposed to prove that Paul could not have written Ephesians be-

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cause it contains a vocabulary foreign to him. If this line of reasoning could prove that Paul did not write Ephesians, it would also prove that he did not write Romans (which has a hundred words not used by Paul elsewhere), or Colossians (which has thirty-eight). (Figures from Gerstner.) Paul used different words in Ephesians simply because he was writing about different subjects than he wrote about elsewhere.

It is also alleged that in several places (1:15; 3:2; 4:20-21) the "writer of Ephesians" indicated that he did not personally know those to whom he was writing, but had only "heard" of their faith. It is assumed that Paul, who had labored three years in and around Ephesus would have written as if he knew his readers intimately and not just by hearsay. But this objection has little weight. Paul had been away from Ephesus for six years when he wrote this letter. Any minister who has been absent from a field of his labor for six years would not write back to them and speak as if he personally knew all of them. Many changes and additions would have occurred in the membership during that time.

Furthermore, Paul wrote to Philemon, whom he knew well, indicating that he had heard of his faith and love (Phil. 5). The mere fact that Paul said he had *heard* of the faith of the Ephesians does not even suggest that he had never been with them.

The many similarities between Colossians and Ephesians have led some people to suggest that the "writer of Ephesians" borrowed freely from Paul's expressions in Colossians. Any person who has written several letters at the same time to different people knows how often one will use the same expressions in several letters. If the similarities between Colossians and Ephesians prove anything, they help to prove that Paul did write Ephesians at the same time he wrote Colossians.

### *Fact Questions*

30. What external evidence indicates that Paul did not write Ephesians?

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31. To what conclusions are we driven if Paul were not the actual author of Ephesians?
32. What does the fact that Ephesians has 82 words in it that are not used in Paul's other writings prove?
33. Does the fact that the writer says he had *heard* of the faith of the Ephesians prove that Paul did not write the epistle? Why or why not?

## IX. OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

Greeting; 1:1-2.

### I. DOCTRINES — Chapters 1, 2, 3.

- A. Blessings we have in Christ from God. 1:3-14.
- B. Paul's prayer for our enlightenment. 1:15-23.
- C. Once dead, now alive with Christ. 2:1-10.
- D. Once aliens, now fellow-citizens with the saints. 2:11-22.
- E. Paul's prayer for our strengthening. 3:1, 14-19.  
Parenthetical discussion of Paul's ministry. 3:2-13.
- F. Doxology. 3:20-21.

### II. DUTIES — Chapters 4, 5, 6.

- A. Keep the unity of the Spirit. 4:1-16.
- B. Walk as becometh saints. 4:17-5:20.
- C. Subject yourselves one to another. 5:21-6:9.
  1. Wives and husbands. 5:22-33.
  2. Children and fathers. 6:1-4.
  3. Slaves and masters. 6:5-9.
- D. Put on the whole armor of God. 6:10-20.

Conclusion. 6:21-24.

- A. Tychicus sent. 6:21-22.
- B. Benediction. 6:23-24.

(More detailed outlines precede the notes on each section.)

### *Fact Questions*

34. What are the two main divisions of Ephesians, and what are their Scripture limitations?
35. Name the six topics in the first half of Ephesians, and tell which chapter each is in.