

Ephesians:

The City and Letter

Did You Hear The One About ...

FOUNDED SOMETIME NEAR THE REIGN of king David in the 10th century B.C. many hundreds of miles northeast of Jerusalem in what would become known as Asia Minor, it began as a small Ionic-Greek settlement on top of the Ayasuluk Hill, surrounded by mountains to the east and south and the Mediterranean to the west, just a mile or two from what would later become the main city and capital of Asia Minor: [Ephesus](#).



Seluk Castle on the Ayasuluk Hill, Ephesus



There's a joke that if you walk into any given Reformed Baptist Church on any given Sunday, the odds are the pastor is either beginning the book of Ephesians, in the middle of the book, or just finishing it up. I've been preaching through books of the Bible now for 17 years. I guess it's time I finally become a Reformed Baptist. This is the next book I want to take us through.

Ephesus: The City

Let's begin with an introduction to the place, its importance to Christianity, and the Letter. "Ephesus" perhaps

means “desirable” or “beloved.”¹ In Christian history it certainly seems to have been that. Paul took Priscilla and Aquilla there and they eventually made the place their home (Acts 18:18, 21). When Paul returned, he spent three years here teaching people “The Way” (Acts 19:9, 23), a phrase that appears more in Luke’s description of Ephesus than any other place. Timothy was installed as pastor of Ephesus (1Ti 1:3; 2Ti 1:18; 4:12). Eusebius says that “great luminaries” were buried here. These seem to include John, seemingly after he left Patmos after writing Revelation.² Some traditions say that he took Jesus’ mother with him to Ephesus and that she was buried somewhere near the city.³ In the 1800s, an excavation revealed what some to believe the tomb St. Luke, who was a frequent companion of Paul and as we know from Acts was obviously there.⁴ There have been persistent

¹ Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 70. The etymology of the name is far from certain. It may derive from a Hittite word meaning something like “later place.”

² Eusebius, *Church History* 5.24.2.

³ See the *Catholic Encyclopedia* on “The Blessed Virgin Mary.” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464b.htm>.

⁴ John Tuttle Wood, *Modern Discoveries on the Site of Ancient Ephesus* (London, The Religious Tract Society, 1890) 85ff. Also, “The Supposed Tomb of St. Luke at Ephesus,” *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archeology*. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/pe-fqs/1879_04_184.pdf.

claims that [Mary Magdalene](#) was buried here.⁵ On his journey to his eventual death in a gladiator arena, the martyr [Ignatius](#) of Antioch wrote one of our earliest letters outside of the NT to the Ephesians. As, of course, did John in his short letter to the church in Revelation. Then there was the [Ecumenical council](#) of 431 that was held here that upheld the Nicene Creed and was famous for calling Mary the *Theotokos*, “Birth Giver of God.”

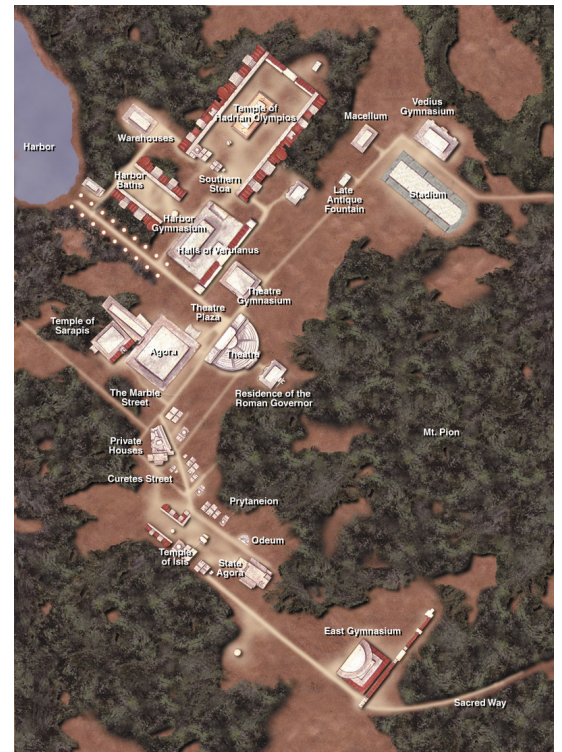
What was it about Ephesus that made it so attractive to so many? Well, the city changed hands many times over the centuries. But under the Romans it became one of the great destinations of the ancient world. Lower estimates put the population in the first century at 250,000. It had [modern roads](#), fancy [gates](#), [libraries](#), and [bathrooms](#) with fresh running water. It boasted one of the largest [amphitheaters](#) in empire, seating upward of 25,000 people. Here you could watch everything from a live play to deadly gladiator games or sparing with “[the beasts at Ephesus](#)” ([1Co 15:32](#)). There was a [sports complex](#) next door where citizens honed their bodies and athletic abilities. Given that Timothy was a young man pastoring in this city when Paul wrote to him, it

⁵ [Joseph Berenger](#), “The Magdalene of Ephesus,” in *Did Mary Magdalene Visit Provence*, trans. Paul Ferguson (Peterborough, England: FastPrint Publishing, 2015, 1925 French Edition), 30-52.

gives the verse, “bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way” (1Ti 4:8) more vibrant context.



Ephesus Theater and Gymnasium (upper right)



Amphitheater Complex

But Ephesus was undoubtedly known best as home to one of the **seven wonders of the ancient world** (**Antipater of Sidon**, *Epigram* 9.58). The renowned “**Temple of Artemis**” was hailed by the historian and traveler **Pausanias** as “**the largest building in the [ancient] world**” (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 4.31.8). Antipater of Sidon said, “**I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labor of**

the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, ‘Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand.’” (Antipater, *ibid*).



Artistic Rendering of the Temple of Artemis: Wonder of the World

The people of this magnificent city were mostly **Gen-til**es. There had been a **Jewish** presence there since at least the third century BC and some reports say that as much as 5%-10% of the population of Asia Minor was Jewish, meaning that you could have had 10,000 – 20,000 Jews in Ephesus. There were regular hostilities between the Jews and the city leaders who persistently violated their rights to worship

God according to their “superstitions” (as the city leaders put it),⁶ even though they were Roman citizens (see **Josephus**, *Antiquities* 14.228-40). This is perhaps related to Paul writing quite a bit about Jewish and Gentile relationships in the letter.

Ephesians: Occasion, Date, Author

Author and Date

So this is the place to which the Apostle Paul (**Eph 1:1**) writes our letter. When did he write it? There are two possibilities. The first is around **55 AD**. The idea here is that having spent three years in the city, preaching and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Luke describes a riot that arises (**Acts 19:24-20:1**). Some scholars have proposed that Paul was imprisoned at this time and due to the whole crazy situation depicted in Acts 19, he writes the letter to the

⁶ Though the Greeks did not mean it this way, what we will see later about the use of magic in this city would certainly not have passed the Jews by. In fact, Luke talks about intenerate Jewish exorcists here (Acts 19:13-14) and these surely were influenced by both the city and the exile from Babylon which brought the seeds of Gnosticism and Kabbalah to Judaism. For more see **Clinton Arnold**, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989), 7-13.

churches while in prison in that very city. There is, however, no real proof that he was ever put in prison at this time and Luke seems to indicate that he left the city fairly quickly (20:1).

The other suggestion is that he writes the letter some 6-7 years after leaving it (AD 61-62), while he is in prison in Rome. Here he would have had correspondence with Onesimus as well as churches like Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi. Thus, it is often listed with the so-called “Prison Letters” which include Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

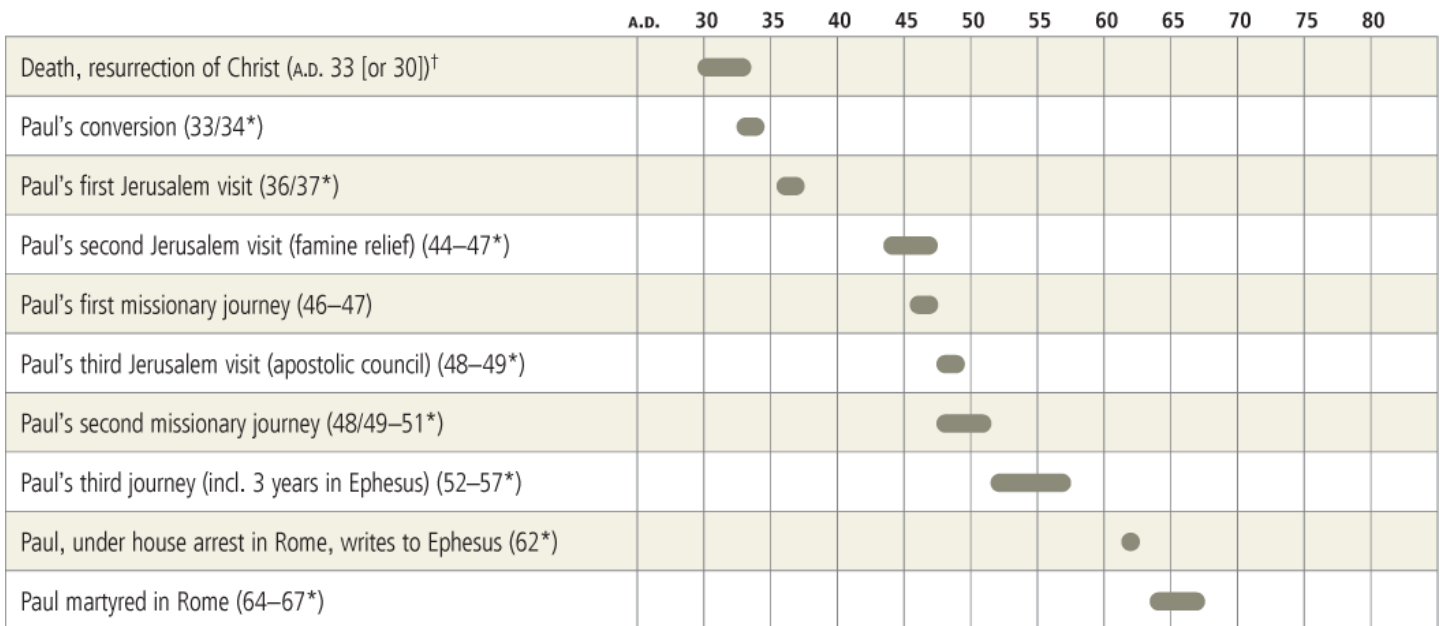


Chart from *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2258

Themes

Ephesians is densely packed with rich theology concerning God's sovereignty, human depravity, slavery to spiritual darkness, the gospel of salvation by faith through grace, the work of Christ building us up into a spiritual temple, along with ethical and practical discussions on how to live in various relationships with one another and how to deal with the spiritual evil in this world and more. A basic outline is something like this:

- I. Introduction (1:1–14)
- II. Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:15–23)
- III. Salvation by Grace through Faith (2:1–10)
- IV. Unity and Peace of Christ (2:11–22)
- V. Revelation of the Gospel Mystery (3:1–13)
- VI. Paul's Prayer for Strength and Insight (3:14–21)
- VII. Unity of the Body of Christ (4:1–16)
- VIII. Paul's Testimony (4:17–24)
- IX. Exhortation to an Edifying Lifestyle (4:25–32)
- X. New Life in Love (5:1–20)
- XI. Submission to One Another (5:21–6:9)
- XII. The Whole Armor of God (6:10–20)
- XIII. Conclusion (6:21–24)⁷

It is also interesting that he seems to borrow fairly heavily from Isaiah 54–60, and I'm sure we will talk more about this as time goes on.⁸

⁷ *The ESV Study Bible*, 2261.

⁸ This chart is from **John Allfree**, *Expository Notes on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (Nottinghamshire: Bible Study Publications, 1973). I found it at the biblical chiasm exchange.

Ephesians			Isaiah
2:2, 5:6	children of disobedience	children of transgression	57:4
2:5	quicken	revive	57:15
2:6	together	I dwell ... with him	57:15
2:6 etc	Heavenly places	the high and holy place the high places of the earth	57:15 58:14
2:12	strangers	son of the stranger	56:3
2:12	covenants of promise	everlasting covenant	55:3 59:21
2:12	No hope	there is no hope	57:10
2:13,17	Far off ... made nigh	to him that is far off and to him that is near	57:19
2:14,15	Peace ... peace	Peace, peace covenant of peace	57:19 54:10
2:19	Household of God	mine house	56:5
2:20	built	build	58:12
2:20	foundation	foundations	54:11
2:21	temple	my house of prayer	56:7
2:22	habitation	I dwell	57:15
5:6	Deceive ... vain	speaking lies	59:4,13
5:7	be not ... partakers with	they ... we	59:8,9
5:8	light	light	60:1
6:14	Breastplate of righteousness	righteousness as a breastplate	59:17
6:17	Helmet of salvation	helmet of salvation	59:17

Occasion

So why did he write it? On first glance it appears that this is **the least situational** of all his letters, including even Romans. There is warning about false teaching (4:14), but it is very generic. There are ethical teachings, but the specificity of them attached to some pressing situation is unlike what we find elsewhere. Thus, you get commentators saying things like, “**We must be careful not to specify a concrete situation or particular problem to which a letter is sent, if**

the evidence is otherwise,”⁹ or “The trouble with Ephesians can be summed up quite simply: it has no setting and little obvious purpose.”¹⁰

It is just here that I believe the **Luke’s inspired discussion** of Paul’s initial visit to Ephesus in Acts 19 becomes **very important**. What he chooses to tell us is significant for understanding the background and worldview assumptions of the people who became Christians and constituted the churches of Ephesus.¹¹ What I’m about to unfold is, I believe, the most important thing I can say to inform our entire reading of Ephesians, at least in terms of **original context**. Here are **two parallel truths**. First, “Nowhere else in any of his writings does Paul elaborate more on the nature of the struggle believers face with their supernatural enemies than he does in Ephesians.”¹² Second, Luke “does not describe any other location with so many accounts of the demonic”¹³ and other supernatural strangeness.

⁹ **Peter T. O’Brien**, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 51.

¹⁰ **John Muddiman**, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary; New York: Continuum, 2001), 12.

¹¹ **Clinton E. Arnold**, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 29–30.

¹² **Clinton E. Arnold**, *Ephesians*, 43.

¹³ **Arnold**, *Power and Magic*, 30.

Luke talks about God “doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them” (19:12). It was here that seven “itinerant Jewish exorcists,” all sons the local Jewish high priest named **Sceva** undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits even though they didn’t believe in Jesus (13-14). Then comes that memorable scene where suddenly one of the possessed men respond back, “‘Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?’ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded” (15-16). Because of this, “a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver” (19), or as one person puts it, **50,000 days wages**.

This sets the stage for the long narrative of the riot I mentioned as the possible setting for Paul’s writing the letter. In this story a man named **Demetrius**, a silversmith, made silver shrines of Artemis. These brought no little business to the many craftsmen of the city (**Acts 19:24**). Luke

tells us that Demetrius was angry because many men's livelihoods were at stake (25) because Paul was going around persuading many people to turn away from Artemis saying that "they are not gods who are made by hands" (26, YLT). So, Demetrius persuaded the city that if Paul were allowed to continue preaching that "the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship" (27). "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" (28) came the shout throughout the city. Everything Luke says about Ephesus deals with the supernatural. Why?

"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:28, 32)

The Temple of Artemis

It is at this point that we need to look more at [Artemis and her temple](#). [F. F. Bruce](#) says, "There had been a Carian settlement here before the Ionians came, devoted to the cult of the great Anatolian mother-goddess in her local manifestation."¹⁴ At some point a temple was built. It underwent

¹⁴ [F. F. Bruce](#). *Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Apple Books.

several stages of building, destruction, and rebuilding. Pausanias said it was founded by the legendary [Amazons](#), and because of its great antiquity he believed this was the reason why some people worshiped her even above Zeus. This was a place of serious paganism, which made it the [perfect attraction for Christians wanting to see people come out of spiritual darkness!](#)

At least three of these stages date prior to [king Croesus](#) who lived 595 – 546 B.C. It was at his time that the temple took on legendary status. He donated nearly all of the money himself, being so fabulously wealthy that 1,000 years later, down into the Middle Ages, people spoke of being “[as rich as Croesus](#).” It was so imposing that [Solinus](#) (3rd cent. A.D.) said it was the only temple the Persian king Xerxes spared as he crashed his way west towards the inevitable battle with Greece. However, legend also says that on the very night that [Alexander the Great](#) was born, Artemis left her temple to visit the baby and a madman named [Herostratus](#), wanting only to have his name remembered for eternity, burned the Wonder to the ground.

This would not snuff out in the city of Ephesus the cult of Artemis. It would be rebuilt by Dinocrates of Rhodes (home to another of the Wonders) under the supervision of

Alexander and would stand for 500 years, including during the travels of the Apostle Paul. In this light, it is interesting that in Ephesians 2 the Apostle likens the Christians to “a holy temple in the Lord [Jesus] ... being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:21).

Artemis of the Ephesians

The goddess herself is important to understand for many reasons,¹⁵ including as one scholar says, “[She] may very well be the most important background for understanding why the author highlights the power of God and corresponding powers of evil in such a book as Ephesians.”¹⁶ Though she does not appear by name in Ephesians, we have seen that she does in Acts. So who is Artemis?

¹⁵ An good introduction to her is Margaret Mowczko “The Regalia of Artemis Ephesia,” (2016). https://www.academia.edu/27239810/The_Regalia_of_Artemis_Ephesia; https://margmowczko.com/regalia-artemis-ephesia/#_ftn1.

¹⁶ Ronn Johnson, “The Old Testament Background for Paul’s Principalities and Powers,” a Dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004, 18.

In Greek and Roman myth, she is the daughter of Zeus¹⁷ and Leto¹⁸ and the twin sister of Apollo,¹⁹ whom the Scripture paints as the “Destroyer” and king of the Abyss (Rev 9:11; cf. Job 26:5-6 [over even the Rephaim]; 28:22; Ps 88:11; Prov 15:11; 27:20), the god of pestilence and destruction and therefore “can be seen as a [god] who brings destruction and whose realm is the underworld.”²⁰

“Artemis” perhaps means “great, excellent, holy.”²¹ According to a 1,000-year-old encyclopedia, she was first worshipped by an Amazonian woman named Ephesos who gave the goddess the name Ephesia.²² In Greek myth, the birthplace of Artemis was a grove called the Ortygia. According to Strabo, the Ephesians identified an area near the city with the same name and claimed this was the site of the goddess’

¹⁷ I have a paper on my website that argues that Zeus could be Satan who in turn could be Baal of the OT. It is speculative, but quite interesting.

¹⁸ Leto’s name could derive from *lēthē* (oblivion) and *lotus* (the fruit that brings oblivion to those who eat it).

“oblivion”

¹⁹ Apollo is actually Apollos’ theophoric (that is, divinized) name, having not been born of Christian parents.

²⁰ M. Hutter, “Abaddon,” ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 1. Hutter uses the term “demon,” which is also associated with Artemis! However, technically speaking, both are gods rather than demigods and the biblical language for them would rarely, if ever, be “demons.” Arnold is also “content to think of the four terms for power in Eph 6:12 ... as ‘demonic spirits.’” With Johnson (p. 17-18), I think this is a mistake.

²¹ Charles Anthon, “Artemis,” *A Classical Dictionary: Containing an Account of the Principle Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855), 210.

²² *Etymologicum Magnum* 402.8 under *Ephesos*.

birth (**Strabo**, *Geography* 14.1.20). Luke's take has the people believing that she and her image “**fell from heaven**” (**Acts 19:35**) to this very place. Thus, the close relationship between the city and the goddess and the reason for her temple there.

The Romans called her “**Diana**,” perhaps meaning “**supplier of beneficence and wellness**.” She was worshipped as goddess of the hunt (a war-goddess) and fertility, and like the possible meaning of the city itself, she was dearly beloved.

Artemis: Goddess of the Hunt



Silver tetradrachm c. 85 B.C. of king Artemidoros (“Gift of Artemis”) with Artemis with drawn bow and quiver on her back (reverse).



Didrachm from Ephesus representing the goddess Artemis

One dictionary says, “**Her great popularity was undoubtedly due to the fact that she was one of the rare goddesses who presided over the exclusively female aspects of**

life like pregnancy, child-birth and the rearing of infants.”²³

I bring this part up as background for the interesting things we read about regarding [women in Ephesians and Timothy](#).

However, at the riot they keep shouting “[Artemis of the Ephesians](#)” ([Acts 19:28, 34](#)). They shouted this for two straight hours Luke tells us. In other words, *their* Artemis, while bearing some resemblance to that of this Artemis is herself something ... different.

In fact, she also bears some striking similarities to the war-fertility goddess(es)²⁴ Isis (Egypt), Ishtar (Babylon), and Asherah (Canaanite) who are, along with her, given the title “[Queen of Heaven](#).” She has often been associated with Cybele, the [Earth Mother Goddess](#),²⁵ thus making her in some people’s minds “[identical with the great mother of Nature](#).”²⁶ I find it very ironic that it was at Ephesus in 431 A.D. that Mary was officially given the title Theotokos or

²³ [G. Mussies](#), “Artemis,” ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 93.

²⁴ These three are themselves possibly just one goddess.

²⁵ [Carissa](#), “Theotokos: How the Mother Goddess became Mary, *Queen of Heaven* (Sept 1, 2010), <https://thequeenofheaven.wordpress.com/2010/09/01/theotokos-how-the-mother-goddess-became-mary/>. For more nuance [Rick Strelan](#), *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), see 90.

²⁶ [Charles Anthon](#), “Artemis,” *A Classical Dictionary: Containing an Account of the Principle Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855), 210; [D. C. Duling](#), “The Testament of Solomon,” in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 970 n. m.

“Mother of God” and that legends grew up around her that she was buried in Ephesus (which she most likely wasn’t). It is probably from these kinds of connections that pagans love to say that the title “Mary Queen of Heaven,” popular amongst Roman Catholics, is derived, for pagans like to think of Christian Mary as nothing but a pagan goddess dressed in new clothes. Given this thought, I was curious and discovered that Paul uses the term “Father” for God twice as much in this letter as he does in any other writing that we have from him.²⁷

Here’s the part I really want you to understand about Artemis. The entire city centered on her worship. In fact, one scholar suggests that this site was chosen at least in part because of “its proximity to a freshwater source” and “the water from the holy source served for the ritual purification of Artemis’ followers.”²⁸ Think about Paul’s “One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism” in Eph 4:5 and the whole idea of having been washed with the word (Eph 5:26).

She was considered the *prothronia* [first-seated], “bringer of light” and “savior” and “Lord.” “Her ability to

²⁷ Romans = 4; 1Co = 3; 2Co = 4; Gal = 4; Php = 3; Col = 4; 1Th = 4; 2Th = 3; 1Ti = 2; 2Ti = 1; Tit = 1; Phm = 1. Ephesians = 8.

²⁸ Michael Immendörfer, *Ephesians and Artemis: The Cult of the Great Goddess of Ephesus as the Epistle’s Context*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 436 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 265-66.

help her worshippers stemmed ... from her awesome power.”²⁹ There is an ancient prayer preserved to her that says in part, “Display your power upon this young man who has died. For all the Ephesians know, both men and women, that all things are governed by you, and that great powers come to us through you.”³⁰ Is this in background for the “one Lord” part or perhaps for the first chapter of Ephesians with Paul’s long introduction about God’s supreme predestining power and later with his discussion of light and darkness?



²⁹ R. Oster, “The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 19 (1976): 40 [24-44], cited in Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 21.

³⁰ See Arnold, 22.

Then there is the fact that Artemis was said, like her brother, to be a goddess of the **underworld**. “She possesses authority and control over the multiplicity of demons of the dead and also the demons of nature ... [she possesses] the keys to the fort of Hades and therefore authority over the underworld gods and demons ... lord of the cosmic powers.”³¹ This is seen in depictions of her as a woman clothed with rows of animals on her skirt and hair. These animals are harmful demonic spirits over which she wields authority, and the numerous bulbous objects on her chest seem to represent magical nourishing power over life. Also, it seems clear that the silversmiths made a lot of money inscribing **magical letters** on her feet, girdle, and crown and this accounts for that riot. There are few gods of the ancient world with all of these attributes, in fact she may be the only one.

Because of her, Ephesus was saturated in magic and superstition and supernatural rituals and many of the people were becoming Christians and were not quick to abandon their pagan past, which is why they had been hoarding their magical books even as Christians, until they saw the power of Christ over the demons of the city with their own eyes.

³¹ Arnold, 23-24, 28.

We can see that this superstition did not stop well into the second century when Ignatius has to remind them,

Now the virginity of Mary and her giving birth were hidden from the ruler of this age, as was also the death of the Lord ... A star shone forth in heaven brighter than all the stars ... and there was perplexity about the origin of this strange phenomenon which was so unlike the others. (3) Consequently, all *magic was dissolved and every wicked spell vanished, ignorance was abolished, and the ancient kingdom was destroyed*³² when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal life; and what had been prepared by God began to take effect.³³

(Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians* 19:1-3)

Perhaps earlier or perhaps later than Paul, by a Jew or by Christians we don't know which, the fabulously strange book the *Testament of Solomon* was probably written from Ephesus.³⁴ It has Solomon bind demon after demon using magical rings. Meanwhile, the demons use *Ephesian magical*

³² This is a secondary reading.

³³ Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 149.

³⁴ "Against Ephesus or some part of 'Asia' no decisive objections appear. In its favor are the only two geographical terms in the document, Lydia and Olympus. The very fact that the sand storm receives as its name two of the Ephesia grammata points – very weakly, to be sure – in the same direction. Like Egypt, Asia was a meeting place for all the currents of ancient thought." Chester C. McCown, *The Testament of Solomon: A Dissertation*. Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 9 (Leipzig, J. C. Heinrichs, 1922), 110.

names (like Lix Tetrax in **TSol 7:5**),³⁵ and the book talks about them as “the world rulers of the darkness” and the “spirits of the air” (**TSol 18:2-3**; cf. **Eph 5:8**; **2:2**), and “principalities and authorities and powers” that fly above and around (**TSol 20:15**; cf. **Eph 1:21**; **3:10**; **6:12**) with Beelzebub the “ruler of the spirits of the air” (**TSol 16:3**; cf. **Eph 2:2**) and the earth and beneath the earth” as their leader.

All of this is background to properly contextualizing this intensely supernatural book, something which not only do many commentaries not do, they positively don't even know how to talk about it properly. Thus, there really is a reason Paul wrote this letter, a letter which became the standard that circulated throughout the early church as the go-to book for what Clinton Arnold has argued has this purpose:

Paul wrote this letter to a large network of local churches in Ephesus and the surrounding cities to affirm them in their new identity in Christ as a means of strengthening them in their ongoing struggle with the powers of darkness, to promote a greater unity between Jews and Gentiles within and among the churches of the area, and to stimulate an ever-increasing transformation of their lifestyles into a

³⁵ Artemis is mentioned in 8:11.

greater conformity to the purity and holiness that God has called them to display [italics original].³⁶

More than any other letter of Paul, and in its unique way perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, Ephesians tells you why Jesus, among all the gods, is “**The Way**” (again, **Acts 19:9, 23**). Not a way. The Only Way. What we will do now is what we have done with Thessalonians and Hebrews. We are going to obey the command of **1 Thessalonians 5:27** which seems to have been a general rule for all of his letters, and to read Ephesians together. That way, you don’t have to take my word for any of what you have just heard. You can hear it all for yourself.

Ephesians (ESV)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ
Jesus:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

³⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT, 45.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease

to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he

came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints,

this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says,

*“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men.”*

(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting

talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the

unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

*“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”*

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “*Honor your father and mother*” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “*that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.*” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondser-

vants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to

me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

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