

Paul and the Ephesians



SABBATH—JUNE 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 18:18–21; Acts 19:13–20; Acts 19:21–20:1; Ephesians 1:1, 2; Ephesians 1:9, 10.

MEMORY VERSE: “He has shown us the plan he had. This plan was what he wanted to do through [by] Christ. When the right time came, God planned to bring together everything in heaven and on earth, and make Christ head [the leader] of them all” (Ephesians 1:9, 10, WE).



The Ephesians lost hope because Paul is in prison.

WHEN WE WRITE SOMETHING, we often have an important reason. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln had an important reason for writing the well-known Gettysburg Address. Mr. Lincoln wrote this famous speech after the terrible fight at Gettysburg during the American Civil War. 7,000 soldiers died at Gettysburg. In the Gettysburg address, President Lincoln said that the Civil War was a test for America. This test would show if America would continue to grow as a country, or not.

Paul also has an important reason for writing to the Ephesians. Paul wants to give the Ephesians courage. The Ephesians lost hope because Paul is in prison. The Ephesians suffer for their faith, too. So, they are ready to give up. Paul tells the Ephesians to remember when they accepted Jesus as their Savior: they became part of God's church (Ephesians 1:19–23; Ephesians 4:1–16). Now they are the same as a temple (Ephesians 2:19–22), Jesus' bride (Ephesians 5:21–33), and a strong army (Ephesians 6:10–20). God has a plan for the Ephesians: God “planned that all things in heaven and on earth be joined together with Christ as the head [in charge]” (Ephesians 1:10, ERV).

PAUL, PREACHER TO THE EPHESIANS (Acts 18:18–21)

What does Paul do during his first visit to Ephesus? Read Acts 18:18–21 for the answer.

Ephesus was a big city in the Kingdom of Rome. During Roman times, Ephesus was the capital city of Asia. In Paul's day, Asia was very rich and growing fast. (Today, this area is modern Turkey.) About 250,000 people lived in Ephesus in Paul's day. Ephesus was built near water. The city was important because trade roads passed through it. The Ephesian people worshiped many gods. One of their gods was named Diana. Diana was the Roman moon goddess. (Diana also was named Artemis by the Greeks; read Acts 19:24, 35, KJV; NKJV.) The Ephesians believed that Diana protected their city. The Ephesians included the worship of Diana in every part of city life, from athletic games to celebrations.

Paul visited Ephesus a second time (Acts 19:1–12) and stayed for three years (Acts 20:31). Paul stayed so long because he wanted to help Christianity grow strong there.

What strange thing happens in Ephesus when Paul is there? How does this story cause people to respect and honor God? Read Acts 19:13–20 for the answers.

In Acts 19, Luke tells us a story about seven Jewish men. These men traveled from city to city to free people from demons. The seven men decided to say Jesus' and Paul's names with other magic words they used to force demons out of people. This decision was a big mistake. When the seven men used Jesus' and Paul's names to force a demon out of a man, something awful happened. The man with the evil spirit jumped on the seven Jews, beat them up, and tore off their clothes. When the people in the city heard what happened to the seven men, they honored Jesus' name (Acts 19:17). Then some of the new Christians in Ephesus burned all their magic books in public. These books were worth "50,000 pieces of silver money" (Acts 19:19, NIV). The Christians in the city learned that they must not mix the worship of Jesus with magic or with other evil things.

The new Christians burned their magic books. How does this action show us what was in their hearts? What does this story teach us about how much we must give the Lord?



Some of the new Christians in Ephesus burned all their magic books in public.

A WILD FIGHT IN THE THEATER (Acts 19:21–20:1)

Read Acts 19:21–20:1. What lessons can we learn from this story?



Paul's work for God in Ephesus was a big success. But his preaching made some people in the city upset.

Paul's work for God in Ephesus was a big success. But his preaching made some people in the city upset. Paul preached against worshiping statues. So, many people stopped buying statues of the moon goddess Diana. The merchants in the city who sold the statues lost money. Then the merchants got very angry. They were filled with pride for their temple. Their temple was very beautiful, with 127 posts all around it. Each post was 60 feet tall and was made from Parian marble. In Bible times, Parian marble was the best marble. Parian marble was white as snow. 36 of the white marble posts were covered with gold. The temple was famous for its beauty. That is why in Bible times the temple was one of the Seven Wonders on the earth.

The merchants also worried that the people would stop giving offerings to the temple after they heard Paul preach (Acts 19:27). One merchant was named Demetrius the silversmith. A silversmith is someone who makes things from silver. Demetrius got other skilled workers in the city angry at Paul. Soon, a big crowd left the marketplace and went to the large theater in the city. This theater was big enough for 25,000 people. For two hours, the people in the theater continued to shout, " 'Great [mighty] is Artemis [Diana] of Ephesus! ' " (Acts 19:34, ERV). Then the town leader came to the theater. He told the crowd to stop shouting and to leave. Then Paul met with the Christians and left the city.

Paul met with the leaders of the Ephesian church at the end of his third trip to preach the Good News about Jesus. What did Paul talk about in this meeting? Read Acts 20:17–38 for the answer.

Here are the things Paul did in Ephesus:

A.D. 52: Paul visits Ephesus for the first time (Acts 18:18–21).

A.D. 53–56: Paul comes back to Ephesus and works for three years (Acts 19:1–20:1). He writes 1 Corinthians near the end of his stay there (1 Corinthians 16:5–9).

A.D. 57: While Paul is at Miletus, he meets with the church leaders from Ephesus (Acts 20:17–38).

A.D. 62: Paul writes his letter to the Ephesians.

READING EPHESIANS IN THE CHURCHES (Ephesians 1–6)

Paul wanted someone to read his letter to the Christians in all the house churches in the city of Ephesus. After Paul left Ephesus, the Christian religion grew. Soon there were many new house churches. Paul sent Tychicus to visit these churches. Tychicus was Paul's assistant. Tychicus visited the house churches and read Paul's letter to church members. For sure, Tychicus's visit and listening to him read Paul's letter helped members of the house churches. A house church included father, mother, children, and slaves (Ephesians 5:21–6:9) that lived in the house. The house church also included other people that the owner of the house took care of and some of his customers. Many of these people may have been there when Tychicus read Paul's letter. Members from other house churches may have joined, too.

Read Paul's letter to the Ephesians. (This letter should take about a half hour to read.) What important topics do you see in the letter?

Topics in Ephesians:

1. Opening greeting (Ephesians 1:1, 2).
2. Blessing (Ephesians 1:3–14).
3. Prayer for wisdom (Ephesians 1:15–23).
4. Dead in the past; now alive with Jesus (Ephesians 2:1–10).
5. Jesus makes His church from both Jews and non-Jews (Ephesians 2:11–22).
6. Paul, preacher to the non-Jews (Ephesians 3:1–13).
7. Praying for church members to know Jesus' love (Ephesians 3:14–21).
8. Peace and agreement in the church (Ephesians 4:1–16).
9. Live the new life in Jesus (Ephesians 4:17–32).
10. Love other people. Obey Bible truth. Be wise (Ephesians 5:1–20).
11. Let Jesus change your life and lead you (Ephesians 5:21–6:9).
12. The church is God's "army" (Ephesians 6:10–20).
13. Closing greeting (Ephesians 6:21–24).

What important ideas do you see in Paul's letter to the Ephesians? What does your answer say to you? What parts of Paul's letter mean the most to you?



Tychicus visited the house churches and read Paul's letter to church members.

A CLOSER LOOK AT PAUL'S LETTER (Ephesians 1:1, 2)

How does Paul begin and end his letter to the Christians in Ephesus? What does Paul want most for the Ephesians? Read Ephesians 1:1, 2 and Ephesians 6:21–24 for the answer.



Paul may have written the letter to the Ephesians while he was in prison in Rome, in about A.D. 62.

In Ephesians 1:1, we learn that Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians. Paul again names himself in the middle of the letter. He says, “I, Paul, am in prison because I am a missionary [worker who serves God in foreign countries] for Jesus Christ to you who are not Jews” (Ephesians 3:1, NLV). Then Paul talks about his work as a teacher and as a church leader (Ephesians 3:1–13). Near the end of the letter, Paul talks about being in prison (Ephesians 6:20). Then Paul ends his letter with some personal words (Ephesians 6:21, 22). Some Bible thinkers don’t believe Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians. But the letter shows that Paul is the writer. Most Christians do accept that Paul wrote Ephesians.

Paul worries about the Ephesians while he is in prison. Why is Paul worried about them? Read Ephesians 3:13 for the answer.

Bible thinkers believe that Paul wrote Ephesians around the time he wrote his other letters from prison. These letters include Colossians (read Colossians 4:7, 8) and Philemon. Paul may have written the letter to the Ephesians while he was in prison in Rome, in about A.D. 62.

Paul doesn’t tell us much about the Ephesian people. That’s because Paul spends his time explaining his message. The topics in Paul’s message are big and important. First, Paul talks about God’s decision before He made the earth (Ephesians 1:4). Then Paul talks about the gift of mercy that God offers us. Paul uses long sentences and several word pictures in his writing. Paul also uses special words again and again. Paul uses this same writing style in other places in the Bible. An example is Romans 8:31–39. But we see the best example of this style in Ephesians. Ephesians also has a lot of praise, prayer, and worship (Ephesians 1:3–14; Ephesians 1:15–23; Ephesians 3:14–21). Ephesians also has powerful sermons by Paul on important Bible truth (Ephesians 4:1–16; Ephesians 5:21–33; Ephesians 6:10–20).

A PROMISE FOR THE JOURNEY (Ephesians 1:9, 10)

How does Paul announce the topic of his letter? Read Ephesians 1:9, 10 for the answer.

What is the big message in the Book of Ephesians? Paul writes about God’s plan for this planet and for the church’s part in this plan. God works with Jesus to make this plan happen. God “planned that all things in heaven and on earth be joined together with Christ as the head [leader]” (Ephesians 1:10, ERV). How does God plan to join everything together? He will use His church. The church will become a place where Jews and non-Jews join as one people (Ephesians 2:14). God commands His people to work together with Him. God’s enemies will see that God’s church is working with Him to make His plan happen (Ephesians 3:10). In this way, God’s enemies will see God’s wisdom.

The Book of Ephesians talks about Jesus. Paul praises the work that God does for us because of Jesus. Paul celebrates all the gifts that God gives us because of Jesus, too. Paul uses the words “in Christ [Jesus]” more than 30 times and other words that are almost the same. Paul praises Jesus everywhere in his letter. As you read the letter, look carefully for the words that Paul uses to talk about Jesus.

Paul wants the Christians in Ephesus to give their lives fully to God. So, Paul tells them to remember they are part of God’s church. When Paul uses the word “church” in his letter, what does he mean? Does the word mean the “local” church members or the worldwide church? The word “church” comes from the Greek word “**ekklēsia**.” Paul uses this word to mean the whole church and not the local church.

Paul uses many word pictures to talk about the church. Below is a list of four of these word pictures:

1. The church is the same as a human body (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Ephesians 2:16; Ephesians 3:6; Ephesians 4:1–16, 25; Ephesians 5:23, 29, 30).
2. The church is the same as a building or temple (Ephesians 2:19–22).
3. The church is the same as a bride (Ephesians 5:22–27).
4. The church is the same as an army (Ephesians 6:10–20).

Each word picture shows us God’s plan for His church.

How can we work together with God’s plan for His church (Ephesians 1:9, 10)?



The church will become a place where Jews and non-Jews join as one people (Ephesians 2:14).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Review Sunday’s study about the story in Acts 19:13–20. This story is about seven men who tried to use the names of Jesus and Paul to force demons out of people. When people in Ephesus hear what happens, they believe that Jesus’ name is very powerful. Then some of the new Christians throw their expensive books about magic into the fire. Scientists found 250 pieces of paper from New Testament times. These pieces of paper come from books that talk about magic and curses. We believe this information is much the same as the information in the magic books that the Christians threw into the flames. These magic books told people what to do to convince gods, goddesses, and spirit powers to do whatever they asked.

Luke tells us that the Ephesians burned books worth 50,000 silver coins. This amount of money was the same as the pay for someone who worked for 50,000 days, or 136 years! How much is that amount worth in dollars today? Let’s say a skilled person from our time makes \$80.00 per day. Then those 50,000 silver coins from Bible times may be worth \$4 million dollars today! The price of these expensive books shows us that they were very important to people in Paul’s time.

This story helps us to see why Paul wrote to the Ephesians. They needed to know “what to do about attacks against them from Satan.”—Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), page 165, adapted. Paul gives the new Christians in Ephesus his answer. His answer is the Letter to the Ephesians. This letter shows us Jesus. Jesus is above every power (Ephesians 1:20–23). Jesus gives strength to everyone who believes in Him (Ephesians 2:15–19; Ephesians 3:14–21; Ephesians 6:10–20).



Luke tells us that the Ephesians burned books worth 50,000 silver coins.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What powers or leaders control our lives today? How strong are these powers? How do they try to get people to honor and respect them above Jesus?
- ② Review Paul’s use of the word “hope” in Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 2:12; and Ephesians 4:4. Why does Paul believe there is hope for the future?

BIBLE DOESN'T BURN IN FIRE

Valentina Melentjeva grew up in the city of Klaipeda when it was under the control of the Soviet Union. Klaipeda was the third-largest city in the country of Lithuania. Valentina's mother was a Christian. But Valentina's family didn't own a Bible. They never talked about Jesus, and they never prayed.

When Valentina was 45, she saw that her neighbor Ira was happy during hard times. So, Valentina asked Ira the secret to her happiness. Then Ira invited Valentina to her home.

When Valentina arrived, Ira put an open Bible in her hands. For the first time in her life, Valentina held a Bible. The Bible was opened to Exodus 20. Valentina started reading the Ten Commandments. When she came to the 4th commandment, she was surprised to read God's words to His people: " 'Remember the Day of Rest, to keep it holy. Six days you will do all your work. But the seventh day is a Day of Rest to the Lord your God. You, your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your cattle, or the traveler who stays with you, must not do any work on this day' " (Exodus 20:8–10, NLV).

Valentina read the Sabbath commandment four times. The seventh day, not Sunday, was the day of rest. Valentina worked on Saturdays her whole life. But now she wanted to live for God and obey the 4th commandment.

The next Saturday, Valentina went with Ira to worship with other Seventh-day Adventists in Klaipeda. On Valentina's second Sabbath in church, someone gave her a new Bible in the Russian language. Valentina loved the Bible more than anything else she owned. A year later, in 2004, Valentina was baptized. Later, Valentina moved to Norway to learn more about God at an Adventist Bible school. When Valentina finished school, the cover on her beloved Bible was so worn it was falling off. So, Valentina paid someone to make a beautiful new cover for it.

In 2021, Valentina watched as her home in Kongsberg, Norway, burned to the ground. Her Bible was in the burning house. For sure, Valentina was sad to lose all her stuff. But the thought of losing her beloved Bible made Valentina sad most of all. Later, after the fire, Valentina's son visited her and walked through what was left of her home. Valentina's son came back holding Valentina's Bible. Valentina was filled with joy. Valentina kept the Bible on a shelf with other spiritual books. The Bible was the only book the fire didn't destroy. The fire hardly touched the book at all! Valentina said, "I am amazed by God's love. He can save anything!"

Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering three years ago. This offering helped open a special center in Sortland, Norway, where people learn about Valentina's favorite book, the Bible.

INSIDE
Story
by TOR TJERANSEN



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