

# Introduction to Ephesians

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## Where is it in the Bible?

Ephesians is the tenth book in the New Testament and is found between Galatians and Philippians.

## Who wrote it?

Although the letter claims to have been written by Paul (1:1), a number of differences with other Pauline letters in areas of vocabulary, style, and concepts have led scholars to doubt this. Some have also questioned whether it was written to the Ephesians. Unlike the letters which were clearly written by Paul, this one does not make any specific references to local people or situations, and the phrase “in Ephesus” (1:1) does not appear in the earliest and best manuscripts.

## When was it written?

The dating of this epistle depends on its authorship. If Paul wrote the letter, it could have been written in the early 60's when he was a prisoner in Rome or possibly during an earlier imprisonment. If someone else is the author, it could have been written anytime between the 70s and the early 90s.

## What is it about?

Ephesians praises God's plan of salvation which was conceived at the creation of the world, accomplished by Jesus Christ, and revealed to the prophets and apostles. All believers, both Jews and Gentiles, have been reconciled as one body in Christ and are called to live a new life as children of the light.

## How is it structured?

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. The Church (1:3-3:21)
  - a. Spiritual Blessings in Christ (1:3-14)
  - b. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:15-23)
  - c. Life from Death (2:1-10)
  - d. Unity in Christ (2:11-22)
  - e. Paul's Ministry (3:1-13)
  - f. Prayer for the Recipients (3:14-21)
- III. Living as Christians (4:1-6:20)
  - a. Unity and Diversity (4:1-16)
  - b. Old and New Life (4:17-24)
  - c. Rules for the New Life (4:25-6:9)
  - d. The Armor of God (6:10-20)
- IV. Closing (6:21-24)

## What are some things to look for?

- **Household Code:** Ephesians 5:21-6:9 presents a “household code” or table of household duties. Such lists were common in Greco-Roman culture. This one is different because it is directed to more powerful members of the household as well as those with less power and status. For example, there are instructions for both children and parents and slaves and masters. This code is presented in the context of mutual submission (5:21) each group has responsibilities toward the other.
- **Mystery:** The Greek word *mystērion* is used six times in this letter, always in connection with something divine. We think of a mystery as something unknown that can be figured out; however, the Greek word refers to something that is unknown but cannot be figured out; it can only be revealed by someone who already knows the secret. In Ephesians, the mystery is the Gospel, which has now been revealed by God to the Church through apostles and prophets. The Church's mission, in turn, is to proclaim it to the world.