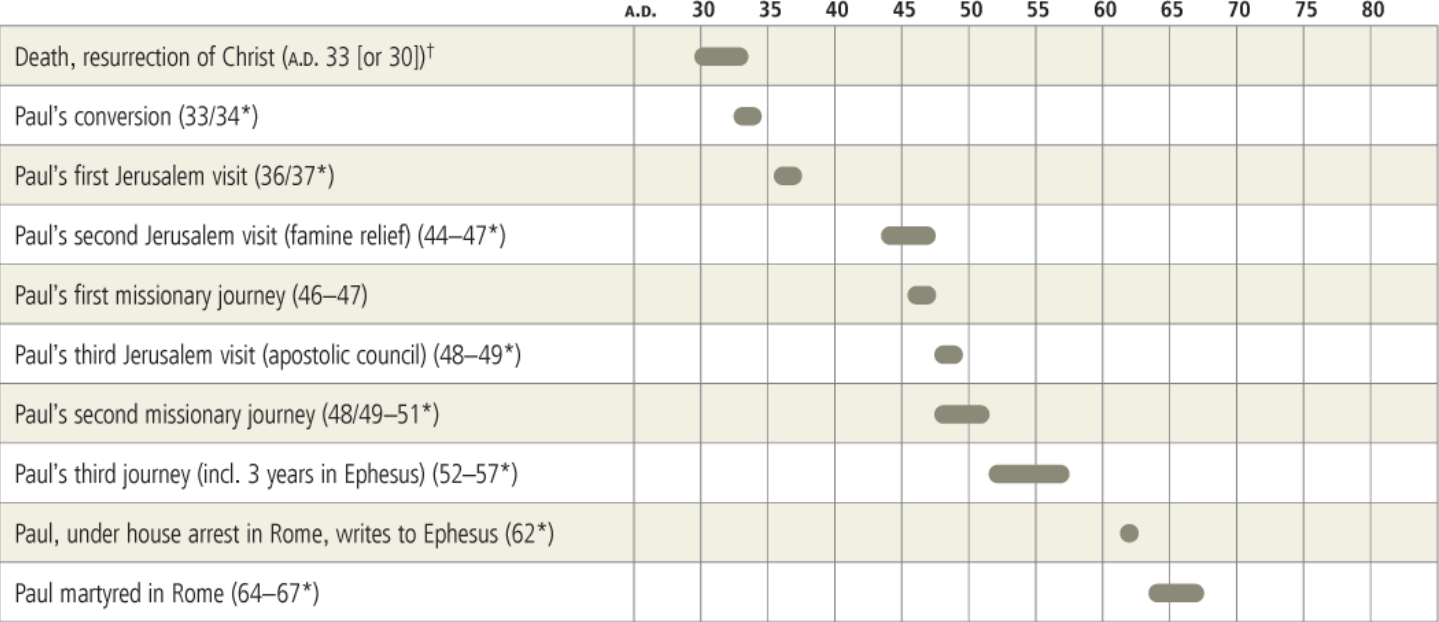


NOON BIBLE STUDY: EPHESIANS (INTRO)

SETTING THE STAGE:

AUTHOR: PAUL IS WRITING WHILE UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ROME (ACTS 28:30-31)



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

GENRE: "EPISTLE" OR LETTER. WRITTEN BY PAUL AND SENT TO EPHESIAN CHURCH

SETTING FOR EPISTLE: ANCIENT CITY OF EPHESUS

EPHESUS WAS A WEALTHY PORT CITY IN THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF ASIA. IT WAS A CENTER OF LEARNING AND WAS POSITIONED NEAR SEVERAL KEY LAND ROUTES IN WESTERN ASIA MINOR. PAUL PROBABLY WROTE HIS LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS WHILE UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ROME (ACTS 28). (ESV STUDY BIBLE, INTRO TO EPHESIANS)

BACKGROUND OF PAUL & EPHESIAN CHURCH:

"THE FOUNDATION OF THE EPHESIAN CHURCH WAS LAID BY THE APOSTLE PAUL ON HIS RETURN FROM THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY. ON HIS ROUTE FROM GREECE TO SYRIA, THE APOSTLE PAID A VISIT TO EPHESUS,



ACCOMPANIED BY PRISCILLA AND AQUILA, WHOM HE LEFT BEHIND IN THE CITY (ACTS 18:18-21). IT WAS ONLY A BRIEF STOPOVER, FOR HE WAS HURRYING ON TO JERUSALEM. HE FOUND TIME, HOWEVER, TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH THE JEWISH LEADER IN THE LOCAL SYNAGOGUE. HE SO IMPRESSED THEM THAT THEY BEGGED HIM TO REMAIN. HE WAS UNABLE TO CHANGE HIS PLANS, THOUGH HE PROMISED TO RETURN IF THAT WAS GOD'S WILL FOR HIM.

CLEARLY THIS PROVED TO BE SO, FOR HE INCLUDED EPHESUS IN HIS ITINERARY ON HIS NEXT MISSIONARY TOUR AND ACTUALLY EXTENDED HIS STAY FOR A PERIOD OF MORE THAN THREE YEARS (C. 54-57 FROM ACTS 20:3). EVIDENTLY THE APOSTLE REALIZED THE STRATEGIC POTENTIAL OF THE METROPOLIS, WHICH HAD BEEN SITED SO AS TO COMMAND THE MAIN HIGHWAY BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. EPHESUS WAS SURROUNDED BY 230 INDEPENDENT COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF ASIA. IF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH WERE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN THE CAPITAL CITY, IT COULD SPREAD FROM THE HUB TO THE RIM.

WHEN HE GOT BACK TO EPHESUS, PAUL FOUND THAT APOLLOS HAD BEEN ACTIVE IN HIS ABSENCE (ACTS 18:27-28). BY NOW APOLLOS HAD MOVED ON TO CORINTH AND PAUL WAS FREE TO CONSOLIDATE THE WORK. FOR THREE MONTHS HE RESUMED HIS PREVIOUS CONFRONTATION WITH THE JEWS AND SOON AROUSED OPPOSITION. HE TOOK HIS CONVERTS WITH HIM AND TRANSFERRED TO THE LECTURE HALL OF TYRANNUS, WHERE HE HELD DAILY CONFERENCES OVER A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS (ACTS 19:9). THE RESULT IS SIGNIFICANT FOR ITS BEARING ON THE DESTINATION OF THE EPHESIAN LETTER. WE ARE TOLD THAT ALL THE RESIDENTS OF PROVINCIAL ASIA, JEWS AND GREEKS ALIKE, HEARD THE WORD OF THE LORD (ACTS 19:10).

THE IMPACT OF PAUL'S MISSION WAS FELT FAR BEYOND THE BOUNDARY OF EPHESUS ITSELF. THE ENTIRE AREA WAS AFFECTED AND THERE WERE CONVERTS EVERYWHERE. THOSE WHO CAME INTO THE CAPITAL ON BUSINESS OR FOR PLEASURE COULD NOT FAIL TO HEAR OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING...

THIS REMARKABLE EXPANSION LED TO AND WAS TEMPORARILY HALTED BY THE DISTURBANCE DESCRIBED IN ACTS 19:23-41 WHEN DEMETRIUS THE SILVERSMITH RALLIED HIS FELLOW TRADE-UNIONISTS. PAUL WAS ALREADY ON THE POINT OF DEPARTURE, AND THIS WAS THE SIGNAL FOR HIS WITHDRAWAL AS HE HEADED FOR ROME (ACTS 19:23-24). ON HIS LAST VOYAGE TO SYRIA (TOWARDS JERUSALEM), HE LANDED AT MILETUS AND THERE TOOK LEAVE OF THE EPHESIAN (ELDERS), COMMITTING THE OVERSIGHT OF THE FLOCK TO THEM IN A SOLEMN AND MOVING CHARGE (ACTS 20:18-35). PAUL WAS NEVER TO VISIT EPHESUS AGAIN. (EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY, VOLUME 11, PAGE 12-13)