

# Studies in the book of EPHESIANS

## TOO BLESSED TO BE STRESSED: THE POWER OF SALVATION

READINGS Ephesians 1:1 - 2:22

A. Background and context.

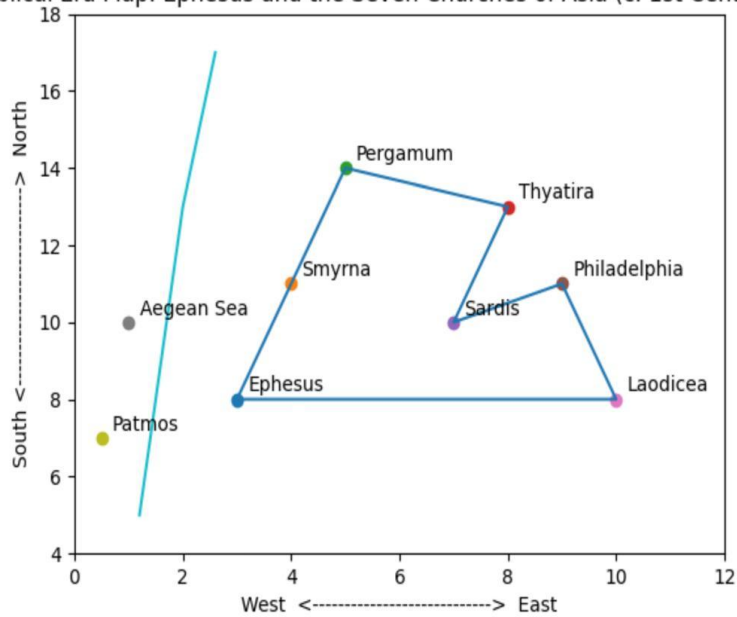


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Biblical\_Era\_Map\_Ephesus\_Seven\_Churches.pdf



This schematic map represents the region of Asia Minor during the 1st century AD, highlighting Ephesus and the Seven Churches mentioned in Revelation 2–3.

Biblical Era Map: Ephesus and the Seven Churches of Asia (c. 1st Century AC)



## 1.Introduction

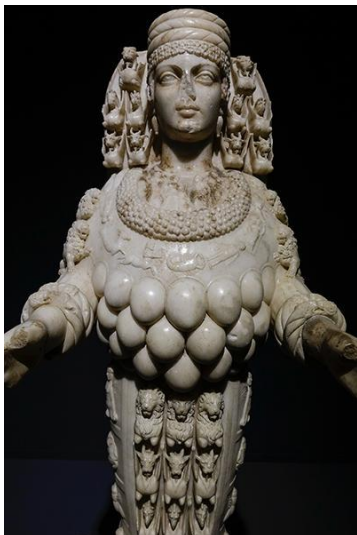
Located twelve hundred miles east of Rome and now approximately two miles inland from the Aegean shoreline of Turkey, are located the remains of Ephesus to the south of the Cayster River, in close proximity to the contemporary settlement of Selcuk .

Ephesus had an incredible role in ancient history. The ancient city was Asia's economic, political, and religious hub, serving as the proconsul's seat, metropolis, and significant pilgrimage destination due to its ecclesiastical heritage. Ephesus is an ancient Ionian Greek city; it was also the home of a world wonder: The Temple of Artemis.

Originally established by the Carians, it became one of the 12 Ionian Cities and played a role in both the Persian and Peloponnesian wars.

Alexander the Great captured it in 333 BC and it thrived during the Hellenistic era. In 133 BC, Rome gained control of the city, and it subsequently became the capital of the Roman province of Asia under the reign of Emperor Augustus. Once, it was Imperial Rome's greatest and arguably the most vital harbour city in the East. Now completely silted and hidden amidst marshy woodlands, this harbour used to function as the central hub for maritime trade, playing a pivotal role in the prosperity of the Roman Empire.

## 2.The Temple of Artemis



The Temple of Artemis or Artemision (Greek: Ἀρτεμίσιον; Turkish: Artemis Tapınağı), also known as the Temple of Diana, was a Greek temple dedicated to a localised form of the goddess Artemis (equated with the Roman goddess Diana). It was located in Ephesus, near modern day Selçuk in Turkey. Paul would later tell the Christian converts...'In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord...' (Eph 2:21)

Some historical stories say that a meteorite fell into this location, and it was covered in bumps that looked like a female breast. The sale of the Goddess's image was very popular:

“About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows: “Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren’t really gods at all. And he’s done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! Of course, I’m not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I’m also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!” Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheatre, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheatre.”

Acts of the Apostles 19:23-27, 29, 31 NLT

### **3.The church at Ephesus**

The church at Ephesus is one of the most prominent in the New Testament, receiving multiple letters from both the Paul and John due to its status as a major spiritual and commercial hub.

- **St. Paul’s Ministry:** The Apostle Paul spent approximately three years in Ephesus (c. 52–55 AD), founding the local Christian community and writing several of his New Testament letters there.
- **Seven Churches of Revelation:** Ephesus is the first of the seven churches addressed by the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation. It was famously warned for having "lost its first love".
- **The Epistle to the Ephesians:** Written around 60–62 AD while Paul was in prison in Rome, this letter focuses on the unity of the church, the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles, and the "Armor of God".
- **Purpose:** Unlike other letters that addressed specific problems, Ephesians is a general "circular letter" intended to encourage believers in their new identity in Christ and their duty to remain holy in a pagan culture.

## Other Connected Letters

- 1 & 2 Timothy: These are "Pastoral Epistles" written by Paul to his protegee, Timothy, whom he had placed in charge of the church at Ephesus to combat false doctrine and appoint leaders.
- 1, 2, & 3 John: Tradition holds that the Apostle John spent his later years in Ephesus and wrote these three general epistles from the city to address the surrounding Christian Epistles". About one-third to one-half of the verses in Ephesians have direct parallels in content and order within Colossians.
- Colossians and Ephesians are very similar and are often referred to as "twin epistles". While they share themes, their purpose differs significantly:  
Colossians (The "Head"): Focuses on the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ as the head of the church. It was written to combat specific "Colossian heresies" involving angel worship and legalism. Ephesians (Body"): Focuses on the nature and unity of the church as Christ's body. It is more general and "encyclical" (meant to be circulated among many churches) rather than addressing a specific local problem.
- Most scholars believe Colossians was written first and served as a template or "outline" that was expanded into the more theological and formal letter to the Ephesians.

## **B. Explaining the text (1:3- 23)**

This book is essentially divided into two with the first half (1-3) focussed on what God has done for us and the second (4-6) indicating what we need to do in response to the divine redemptive initiative.

The letter opens with an outline of the blessings we have in Christ, given to us by the triune God:

Paul begins with one of the most profound theological passages in the New Testament.

### **1:3–14 — The Believer's Spiritual Wealth**

Paul describes the Trinitarian work of salvation.

#### **The Father's work**

- Chose believers before the foundation of the world
- Predestined us for adoption
- Accepted us in Grace

### **The Son's work**

- Redemption through His blood
- Forgiveness of sins

### **The Holy Spirit's work**

- Seals believers
- Guarantees our inheritance

**CHOSEN (1:4)** This is a much-debated topic in some Christian circles but the emphasis is on the sovereign initiative of God in the salvation story. Human lostness is too profound for them to take credit for turning to God. The bias of sin always directs us away from God, so we are to grateful for a God who chose to pursue us!

“You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.”

John 15:16 NLT

“As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous— not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.””

Romans 3:10-12 NLT

“When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.””

Luke 19:5-6, 9-10 NLT

**ADOPTED (1:5)** The terms used is one that describes the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman Culture:

- The cancellation of debt
- A new name and identity
- A new inheritance
- The testimony of witness

**ACCEPTED (1:6)** The giving of lavish grace to us is the sign of God's acceptance into his family. We need to embrace and enjoy our acceptance by God.

**REDEEMED (1:7)** The concept imbedded here means, deliverance as result of payment of a ransom; emancipation from a curse; the restoration of liberty.

**FORGIVENESS. (1:7b)** A word to describe the action of 'moving away' ...nkt unlike the sending away of the scape goat in Lev 16. No written accusation stands against us because our sins have been taken away! Sin made us poor, but grace makes us rich.

“When Aaron has finished purifying the Most Holy Place and the Tabernacle and the altar, he must present the live goat. He will lay both of his hands on the goat’s head and confess over it all the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of the people of Israel. In this way, he will transfer the people’s sins to the head of the goat. Then a man specially chosen for the task will drive the goat into the wilderness.”

Leviticus 16:20-21 NLT

**REVELATION (1:9)** This letter has much to say about God’s plan for His people, a plan that was not fully understood even in Paul’s day. The word mystery has nothing to do with things mystical and weird. It simply means a “sacred secret, once hidden but now revealed.” We believers have now been made aware of God’s secret plan of restoration for fallen creation. We are able to share in the secret that God will one day unite and restore everything in Christ.

**INHERITANCE (1:11-12)** The King James Version reads, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,” but “in whom also we were made an inheritance” is also a possible translation. Both are true and the one includes the other. In Christ we have a wonderful inheritance (1 Peter 1:1–4), and in Christ we are an inheritance. We are valuable to Him. Think of the price God paid to purchase us and make us part of His inheritance God the Son is the Father’s love gift to us; and we are the Father’s love gift to His Son!

**SEALED BY THE SPIRIT (1:13-14)** Paul likely used the word “seal” because Ephesus was a major trade city where sealing goods and documents was a daily practice. That makes the image even more vivid for the original readers:

### **1. A Seal Meant Ownership**

In the ancient Roman world, a seal (often a wax seal with a signet ring) showed who something belonged to. For example: A king would seal a letter with his ring, A merchant would seal goods to show they were his. If then left at the market, they could not be sold to another as they were 'spoken for' by the merchant!

When Paul says believers are sealed with the Spirit, it means: God marks believers as belonging to Him. This shows, we are God’s possession and we belong to Christ.

## **2. A Seal Meant Authentication**

A seal also confirmed that something was genuine and official. Royal decrees were sealed to show they were authentic. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is God's mark that a person truly belongs to Christ.

Evidence of this includes:

- Inner conviction of salvation
- Spiritual transformation
- New desires to follow God

## **3. A Seal Meant Security and Protection**

Seals were used to secure something so it could not be tampered with. NB The tomb of Jesus Christ was sealed by Roman authorities (Matthew 27:66). When believers are sealed with the Spirit, it means: God secures their salvation, The Spirit protects and preserves them, but note how believers are cautioned to behave:

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

— Ephesians 4:30

## **4. A Seal Is Also a Guarantee**

Paul says the Spirit is a “deposit” or “guarantee”. The Greek word means down payment. The Spirit's presence is our first installment of eternal life and a promise that full salvation is coming...So the Spirit is both, a seal and a guarantee of inheritance.

In summary:

Being sealed by the Spirit means the Holy Spirit is God's mark on believers that:

- They belong to God
- Their salvation is authentic
- Their future inheritance is guaranteed
- They are secure until the day of redemption

The early church was so keen to see believers baptised in the Holy Spirit, as a moment that acted as a 'seal' of God's activity in their lives. The striking impact of that experience was enough evidence to accept authentic faith:

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God's message, they sent Peter and John there. As soon as they arrived, they

prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

Acts of the Apostles 8:14-17 NLT

“Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” So, he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.”

Acts of the Apostles 10:44-48 NLT

“While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul travelled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked them. “No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Then what baptism did you experience?” he asked. And they replied, “The baptism of John.” Paul said, “John’s baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.” As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.”

Acts of the Apostles 19:1-7 NLT

The apostle Paul then sets out his prayer for the believers to grasp the full significance of what he has just shared. Eph 1:15 - 23

### **C. PREDESTINATION - a theological controversy?**

The book of Ephesians places quite an emphasis on what it means to be 'chosen' by God. This concept appears several times in chapter one. Christians have different interpretations of 'predestination', even though most agree that the concept appears in the Bible—especially in passages like Ephesians (Eph. 1:4–5) and Romans (Rom. 8:29–30). The differences come from how God’s sovereignty and human free will are understood together.

Below are the main views taught in Christianity today



## **1. Reformed / Calvinist View**

Associated with the theologian John Calvin. God sovereignly chooses who will be saved before the foundation of the world. This is sometimes called unconditional election.

Key points:

- God's choice is not based on human merit or future faith.
- Salvation is entirely an act of God's grace.
- Those chosen by God will ultimately come to faith in Christ.

Some Reformed theologians also teach double predestination:

- God predestines some to salvation.
- Others are left in their sin and judgment.

Common scriptures used:

- Epistle to the Ephesians 1:4–5
- Epistle to the Romans 8:29–30
- Gospel of John 6:44

## **2. Arminian View**

Associated with Jacobus Arminius. God predestines based on His foreknowledge of who will freely respond to the gospel.

Key points:

- God desires everyone to be saved.
- Humans have genuine free will to accept or reject grace.
- Election is conditional upon faith.

God knows beforehand who will believe, and those believers are predestined to salvation.

Common scriptures used:

- First Epistle to Timothy 2:4
- Second Epistle of Peter 3:9
- Epistle to the Romans 8:29

## **3. Corporate Election View**

This interpretation focuses strongly on passages like Ephesians. God predestined a group (the church in Christ) rather than selecting individuals beforehand.

In this view: Christ is the chosen one, and then those who place faith in Christ share in that election. So, predestination describes the destiny of those in Christ, not the selection of who will believe.

This third view is a modification of the second view and is actually the one I prefer. My personal predestination is linked to God's purpose for the church in Christ. I am not predestined INTO Christ but IN CHRIST I find myself predestined to enjoy all God has planned for those who do not resist his grace.

The discussion on ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED THEN BECOMES REDUNDANT.....I have been saved from the penalty of sin, I am being saved from the power of sin, I will be saved from the presence of sin and then receive a brand new body ...WE MUST STAY FOCUSED AND FAITHFUL AND ALL WE HAVE BEEN PROMISED WILL BE OURS

“And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)”

Romans 8:23-25 NLT

#### **D. EXPLAINING THE TEXT 2:1 - 22**

From Death to Life....

##### **2:1–3 — The True Human Condition**

Before salvation people are: Dead in trespasses and sins... Following the world...Controlled by Satan...Living in fleshly desires.

This describes spiritual death. This is why we needed saving and given divine rescue. We were not basically good but needing a little help. We were ruined!

##### **2:4–10 — Salvation by Grace**

One of the clearest salvation passages in Scripture: (2:8) “By grace you have been saved through faith. Important truths:

- Salvation is not earned
- It is a gift
- Good works are the result, not the cause, of salvation.

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

Ephesians 2:10 NLT

### **2:11–22 — One New Humanity**

Paul explains how Christ removed the division between: Jews and Gentiles. Christ broke down the “dividing wall of hostility.” What does this mean?

Paul asserts that Christ has broken down the “middle wall of partition” (NIV “dividing wall of hostility”) that divided Jews and Gentiles and has made of the two one new people. Paul probably has in mind a literal wall as a tangible symbol of the division between Jews and Gentiles—the wall in the temple area in Jerusalem separating the court of the Gentiles from the courts into which only Jews might enter. On this wall was a notice in Greek and Latin, warning Gentiles to keep out on pain of death. In A.D. 1871 archaeologists who were excavating the site of the temple found a pillar with this inscription, “No man of another nation is to enter within the fence and enclosure around the temple, and whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues.” Paul himself almost lost his life in the temple enclosure when at the end of his third missionary journey his Jewish enemies accused him of bringing Trophimus the Ephesian past this barrier in the temple (Acts.21.29).

Now things have changed forever as believers form:

- One new man (humanity) without rejection and division.
- One new household and family.
- One temple of worship and access to the true and living God
- Christ is the cornerstone that holds it all together!