

Paul's Prison Epistles

Lesson 3

Paul and the Ephesians

Lesson Guide



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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Preparation

- Read the book of Ephesians.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

II. Background (2:18)

Paul's letters were pastoral and caring, and spoke directly to the problems that the church faced in the first century.

A. Authorship (3:31)

Whenever the church discovered a letter to be a forgery, they rejected it (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

Ephesians closely resembles Paul's other letters in both doctrine and language.

According to Acts 19–21, Paul had planted the church in Ephesus, and had lived in Ephesus for two years.

B. Audience (7:28)**1. Primary Audience (7:37)**

Paul identified the church in Ephesus as his audience (Ephesians 1:1).

Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman Province of Asia.

Many details in the letter would have been particularly relevant to Ephesus:

- Paul strongly taught against “unfruitful works of darkness” and insisted that Christians battle against false pagan gods (Ephesians 5:11; 6:11-12).

- Paul spoke of Christ as “feeding” or “nurturing” the church and turning the church into his “glorious,” radiant bride (Ephesians 5:27-29).

Several early church fathers testified that Paul sent this letter to the Ephesians.

“We have it on the true tradition of the Church, that this epistle was sent to the Ephesians, not to the Laodiceans” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 5 chapter 17).

2. **Secondary Audience (12:34)**

A number of churches grew in the Lycus Valley in the first century (i.e., Colossae, Laodicea, and possibly Hieropolis).

a. **Unfamiliar audience (13:45)**

There was a significant portion of Paul’s audience whose faith he had not seen firsthand (Ephesians 1:15; 3:2-3).

Paul letter contains no personal references, indicating that Paul wanted his letter to circulate to unfamiliar churches.

b. **Relevance (16:20)**

Tychicus delivered letters for Paul to Ephesus, Colossae, and possibly Laodicea (Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8, 16).

The churches in the Lycus Valley were frequently in Paul's mind during his imprisonment (Colossians 2:1; 4:12-13).

Paul addressed similar problems, i.e., heretical false teachers promoting veneration of spiritual beings (Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:20-22).

- *archē* (ἀρχή) – “rule”
- *exousia* (ἐξουσία) – “authority”
- *kuriotēs* (κυριότης) – “dominion”
- *dunamis* (δύναμις) – “power”

In both letters, Paul highlighted Jesus' superiority over all things, including over spiritual beings.

C. Purpose (22:19)

1. Kingdom of God (23:10)

Paul referred to God's kingdom and often used other royal vocabulary.

Paul spoke of “the age to come” — the time when God will pour out ultimate blessings and curses in Christ.

Preaching about the kingdom of God formed the core of Paul’s apostolic ministry (Acts 28:30-31).

Paul proclaimed that Jesus, our King, will defeat all his enemies, conquer sin and death, make all things new and establish believers as the heirs of the new creation..

Paul drew attention to God’s kingdom in his letter to the Ephesians:

- Citizenship, 2:12, 19

In the Old Testament, God’s people were organized as the kingdom of Israel.

Paul called Christians “citizens” referring to their citizenship in the kingdom of God in Christ.

- Inheritance, 1:14, 18; 5:5

Paul explicitly associated our inheritance as followers of Christ with God's kingdom in Christ .

- Military Service, 6:10-18

Paul insisted that Christians engage in spiritual warfare, he implied that they did so as citizens of God's kingdom in Christ.

- Rule over Creation, 1:20–2:6

Paul taught that Christ was the king, and that believers are both citizens and authorities within his kingdom

- Source of Names, 3:15

In the Old Testament, God's people were called by his name because they were a part of his kingdom (Amos 9:11-12).

When Paul wrote about receiving God's name, the Ephesians would have associated it with becoming part of God's kingdom in Christ.

- Ambassador, 6:20

Paul spoke of himself as God's ambassador — an official representative of the king or emperor.

2. Challenges (35:06)

Paul addressed the challenges that the churches in Ephesus and the Lycus Valley faced:

- Sinful Nature

Paul taught that sin must not characterize the citizens of God's kingdom (5:5).

- Racial Tensions

Paul used the imagery of the kingdom of God to address racial or ethnic tension between Jews and Gentiles in the church (2:11-13).

Paul taught that Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to one another partly because they are now citizens in the same kingdom.

- **Demonic Forces**

False teachers tried to persuade Christians to worship spiritual powers (Satan, demons) and the basic elements (earth, air, water and fire).

Paul reminded the Ephesians that before they became believers they followed the “prince of the power of the air” (2:1-2).

The church as God’s kingdom is not at war with people or “flesh and blood,” but with Satan and his demons.

III. Structure and Content (43:37)

A. Salutation, 1:1-2 (43:56)

The salutation states that the letter comes from the apostle Paul, and mentions that he holds his apostleship “by the will of God.”

B. Praise, 1:3-14 (45:03)

This is Paul’s only canonical letter in which the salutation is followed by such a section of praise to God.

In this section, Paul honored the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and emphasized:

- salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ (verse 7)
- the revelation of the mystery of the gospel (verse 9)
- the promise of our future glory, ensured by the gift of the Holy Spirit (verses 11-14)

Paul's greater, all-encompassing focus in this section was on the kingdom of God and his praise to God:

- for his sovereign rule and for predestining certain individuals to be his people in Christ (1:4, 5).
- for his sovereign rule over all creation that will eventually bring all things under the headship of Christ (verses 9 and 10)
- for his benevolence toward his people (verses 5-7).

Paul joined his praise for God's royal sovereignty with praise for God's many royal benevolences toward his people.

C. Prayer, 1:15-23 (48:55)

Paul's prayers for the Ephesians consisted of:

- thankfulness
- petition
- explanation

Paul repeated the themes he emphasized in his preceding doxology:

- Trinitarian theology (1:17)
- atonement of Jesus Christ (1:19, 20)
- revelation (1:17-19)
- future glory (1:18)
- the kingdom of God

Theme of God's kingdom in Paul's praise focused on:

- sovereign rule – God's power and authority (1:19, 21)
- benevolence – the good things he freely gives as King to his people (1:19, 22, 23)
- inheritance – granted in Christ (1:18)

Paul spoke of Christ's inheritance as our hope because Christ shares his inheritance with us, drawing from a common Old Testament idea (Deuteronomy 9:26-29).

D. Body, 2:1–6:20 (52:55)

The body focuses on the contrast between the righteous kingdom of God and the sinful kingdom of demons and fallen humanity.

1. Citizenship, 2:1-22 (53:20)

- Kingdom of Darkness, 2:1-3

All human beings are born sinful and fallen:

- spiritually dead
- evil natures
- God's enemies
- under God's wrath

Before God saves us, we willingly follow our sinful natures, and serve Satan, the ruler of the kingdom of the air (2:1-3).

- Kingdom of Light, 2:4-10

God uses his royal prerogative to transfer his people to the kingdom of light, renewing of our spirits and recreating us in Christ.

- Nature of Citizenship, 2:11-22

God fulfilled the Old Testament ideal of extending his blessings from Jews to Gentiles (Psalm 22:27-28).

In Paul's day, the status of Gentile Christians was highly controversial.

Paul knew that the faithful of Israel were to spread the salvation they enjoyed to the Gentiles as well.

Paul insisted that the old distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in God's kingdom are obsolete.

All citizens of the kingdom of light are full citizens with the same rights and privileges (2:13-19).

2. Administration, 3:1-21 (1:01:48)

Just before his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would arise from their own ranks (Acts 20:28-30).

Paul instructed the elders to guard the flock against these false teachers.

God ordained apostles to administer his kingdom — those who were chosen and trained by Christ himself, and who had met the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

Apostles possessed special grace from God that authorized their ministry and special revelation from God that taught them infallible truth (Ephesians 3:2-7).

As an apostle, Paul's obligation was to administer God's kingdom under Christ, explaining the rules of the kingdom and condemning those who stood against him.

God appointed Paul to be his official representative and this made Paul's word authoritative, as if spoken by God himself.

In Paul's day, there were so many false teachings circulating that it was hard to know what God's requirements really were.

As an apostle, Paul spoke God's words to God's people to lead them into the truth.

Paul prayed that the Holy Spirit would illumine the people's minds so that they would accept his authority and teaching (3:14-21).

3. Code for Living, 4:1-6:20 (1:08:46)

- Ecclesiastical Order in the Kingdom, 4:1-16

Paul focused primarily on positions of leadership, influence and authority in the church, emphasizing the ways these roles work together for the good of all.

When each person does his or her assigned tasks, it benefits the whole kingdom (4:8).

Paul portrayed the Lord as a victorious king returning from battle who shares the spoils of his victory with his army (Psalm 68:18).

The leaders of Christ's church enable the citizens of his kingdom to serve one another and build up the body, or kingdom, of Christ (4:7-12).

- Purifying the Kingdom, 4:17–5:20

In the kingdom of light, we have new natures that can overcome sin, though our sinful natures have not entirely vanished (4:22-24).

- Domestic Order in the Kingdom, 5:21–6:9

Paul spoke of maintaining the proper authority structures that exist within households.

Paul affirmed domestic authority structures (husbands/wives, parents/children, masters/slaves) teaching all to serve in ways that honored and benefited the whole.

- Warfare of the Kingdom, 6:10-20

Everyone in the kingdom of light is called to serve in God's army, fighting the spiritual war against the kingdom of darkness (6:11-12).

To make sure we can stand firm against our enemies, Christ suits us in the whole armor of God and arms us with his word.

E. Final Greetings, 6:21-24 (1:19:26)

Paul offered a closing blessing, and indicated that Tychicus would deliver this letter.

IV. Modern Application (1:20:05)**A. Honoring the King (1:20:19)**

God demonstrates his great love when he regenerates us, transfers us into his kingdom, places us in a position of authority and honor, and gives us our inheritance (2:4-7).

The gospel demonstrates God loves the people of his kingdom and that he values us highly.

Because God has done all these wonderful things for us, we are called to love and to honor him in return (3:17-4:1)

Paul honored God by ascribing glory to him and exhorted his readers to honor God by living a life “worthy of the calling” they had received.

1. Praise and Worship (1:24:32)

Paul explicitly instructed his readers to honor God through praise and worship (5:19-20).

We are to continually express our heartfelt gratitude, whether we express them outwardly to others, or inwardly to the Lord alone.

Paul's models of praise are introductory praise (1:3-14) and doxological prayer (3:14-21).

Both sections include Paul's earlier themes:

- Trinitarian work
- atonement
- revelation
- future glory

2. Obedience (1:27:02)

Paul taught us express our obedience to God is by remaining loyal to him and seeking to please him (5:8-10; 6:24).

Because God has brought us into his kingdom, we owe him our obedience, living in ways that please our new Lord and King (6:24).

God created us anew in Christ so that we would be productive citizens in his kingdom, doing the good works he assigned to us (2:8-10).

Good works are designed to bring God glory, and to expand and purify his kingdom and to minister to his people.

B. Building the Kingdom (1:30:41)

1. Temple (1:31:02)

The kingdom of God as a building with each Christian being a stone in the structure, both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Christ has the position of preeminence, the cornerstone of the foundation, the one on whom all the other stones rely.

The goal of this building was to become God's dwelling, so that God would live in the midst of his people.

The nation of Israel experienced this blessing in small ways in the Tabernacle and in the temple (2 Chronicles 6).

But the Old Testament also taught that the Gentiles would eventually live in God's presence, too. For example, listen to God's words in Isaiah 66:19-20:

When God restored a faithful remnant of Israel after the exile, beginning with Jesus, the Israelites would return to the temple in Jerusalem to worship the Lord (Isaiah 66:19-20).

In Paul's day, some Jewish Christians perpetuated the idea that Jews were superior to Gentiles because they were the chosen people of God.

Only Christ deserves God's blessing but because we are united to Christ by faith, God counts us as deserving of his blessings too.

2. **Body (1:37:21)**

Paul taught that Christ is the head and that all believers collectively compose Christ's body (1:20-23).

As members of the one body of Christ, Jewish and Gentile Christians are all united to Christ and to one another in Christ (3:6).

The good works God has prepared for us consist largely of services to one another, for the purpose of building up the church (4:11-13).

God has established leaders in the church who are to prepare the rest of us to minister to one another guiding the church toward:

- “unity of the faith”
- to attain “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”

Love must characterize both the leader's teaching and the church's works of service (4:15-16).

Our love for our neighbors is a loyal commitment and dedication that seeks the benefit of others in Christ.

C. Conquering the Cosmos (1:44:49)

God's kingdom currently co-exists with the present age of sin and death and his forces battle against demons and tyranny of sin.

When Jesus returns he will deliver final judgment against his enemies.

Our King is already seated in power and authority above them, and we are seated with him.

Through his grace and Spirit, God provides us with power to stand against our enemies (6:13, 16)

The very existence of the church testifies to the doom of all of God's enemies (3:8-11).

The church is the treasure Christ fought for, the beloved bride that he gave his life to protect and to marry (5:23-27).

The existence of the church, the forgiveness of the church, and the sanctification of the church, all prove that the kingdom of God is growing on earth.

Christ has been exalted as King of the universe in order that the church might be blessed (1:22-23).

V. Conclusion (1:51:38)

Review Questions

1. Why should we believe that Paul wrote Ephesians?
2. Why did Paul write the letter to the Ephesians?

7. Why should Christians work to build the kingdom of God?

8. Describe Paul's teaching about this age and the age to come.

9. How are Christians to respond to the blessings we receive from Christ our King?

Application Questions

1. What blessings and benefits result from being citizens of the kingdom of God?
2. How does your understanding of the gospel fit with Paul's teaching on the kingdom of God?
3. How should Paul's teachings on the kingdom of God shape our approach to Christians from different cultural or racial backgrounds?
4. Dr. Kidd mentioned that "in Christ each believer is counted as if he or she were Jesus himself." What practical implications should this have for you in your Christian life?
5. How should our interaction with others inside the kingdom of God differ from our interaction with those who belong to the kingdom of darkness?
6. In light of Paul's teachings in Ephesians, what are some practical things you can do to be more effective in your pursuit of moral purity?
7. How is the relationship between a king and his subjects similar to God's relationship to believers?
8. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

Glossary

apostle – Special New Testament office held by someone who had been taught by Jesus, had seen the risen Lord, and had been chosen for the office by the Lord himself; from a Greek word meaning "one who is sent"

archē – Greek term (transliteration) meaning "beginning" or "origin"; sometimes translated "rulers" or "principalities" in reference to invisible powers like angels or demons

Artemis – Greek goddess, the daughter of Zeus and Leto; goddess of the wilderness and childbirth; the patron goddess of Ephesus

atonement – A sacrifice made to remove the guilt of sin and reconcile the sinner with God

canonical – Adjective used to describe writings that are accepted as inspired and therefore belonging to the Bible

circumcision – The Jewish tradition of excising the foreskin of the male penis instituted by God as a sign and seal for his covenant people in Genesis 17:10-14

Clement of Alexandria – (ca. A.D. 150-215) Early church father and writer from Alexandria

covenant – A binding legal agreement made either between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

Deutero-Pauline – A term used by some modern scholars to identify letters attributed to Paul that instead may have been written by one of Paul's students under his name

doxology – An expression, prayer, or hymn of praise to God, usually liturgical

dunamis – Greek term (transliteration) meaning "power," "strength," or "ability"; in first-century Judaism, sometimes applied to demons that aligned themselves with Satan to fight against God

ecclesiastical – Relating to the church, especially as an established institution

ektrophō – Greek term (transliteration) meaning "to nourish" or "to nurture"

endoxos – Greek term (transliteration) meaning "held in honor" or "glorious"

Epaphras – Fellow laborer with the apostle Paul and founder of the church in Colossae who was sent by the churches of the Lycus Valley to minister to Paul in prison

Ephesus – City in Asia Minor; visited by Paul on his third missionary journey; place where John probably wrote the fourth gospel; said to have lost their "first love" in Revelation

exousia – Greek term (transliteration) meaning "power" or "authority"; often refers to invisible spiritual powers such as angels or demons

Gentile – Non-Jewish person

gospel – Literally, "good news"; announcement that God's kingdom came to earth through the person and work of Jesus and that it expands toward its great consummation as God grants salvation to those who receive and trust in Jesus as the Messiah

kingdom of God – God’s sovereign and unchanging rule over all of creation

kuriotēs – Greek term (transliteration) meaning “dominion” or “one who possesses dominion”; usually refers to human kings but can refer to spiritual beings

Laodicea – City in Asia Minor; in the book of Revelation, Jesus accused the church here of being "neither hot nor cold"

Lycus Valley – An area defined by the Lycus River in the ancient Roman province of Asia Minor where Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea were located

pseudonymity – The practice of assigning written works to someone other than the actual author

regeneration – Recreation; rebirth; in theology, the event in which a human being moves from a state of spiritual death into a state of spiritual life

remnant – Term used in the Bible to refer to a group of faithful Israelites who would be spared the judgment that would come upon the unfaithful

Solomon – Son of King David and third king of Israel who was known for his wisdom and wealth; expanded Israel’s borders and built the first temple in Jerusalem

temple – Building in Jerusalem where the Israelites worshiped God and where God promised to be present with his people in a special way; destroyed in 586 B.C., later rebuilt, and destroyed again in A.D. 70

Tertullian – (ca. A.D. 155-230) Early Christian writer and church father from Carthage who wrote *Against Marcion* and popularized the Latin terminology used to discuss the Trinity

Tychicus – One of Paul’s close friends from Asia Minor who accompanied Paul during part of his missionary journeys and who brought messages to and from Paul during Paul’s imprisonment