

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 18, Introduction to Ephesians

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 18, Introduction to Ephesians.

Welcome back to our biblical studies lecture series on prison epistles.

I hope you are learning a few things so far. We have covered a few books so far in the discussion, and now we move on to look at Ephesians. Ephesians is one of the greatest books in the New Testament.

Don't take my word for it. Ask John Calvin. And Calvin will tell you that it is one of his favorite books.

Ephesians has become, or was, in the history of the church, the favorite book for so many Christian leaders. Why? Because it's amazing how many doctrines are actually derived and how many favorite hymns are inspired by lines from this book. I will not be honest with you if I don't give a disclaimer to say I love this book called Ephesians.

I study it. I like to say I live and breathe and think it. Ephesians is a very important book in many ways.

Think about the doctrine of salvation and when we think and talk about salvation by grace. Think about where we get the whole idea of spiritual warfare and how we work within that framework. Think about some of the references we go to when we are talking about Christian unity.

When we talk about spiritual gifts, we don't want to get ourselves into a messy situation in Corinth. Guess, apart from Romans where we go, but for the early church fathers, some of their greatest interest in this book resided in the first three chapters of the book. Before we get so excited, or I get so excited and hopefully make you so excited about this book, let's begin to look at some introductory issues.

The dating of Ephesians is placed between 60-62 or 80-200. Why two different dates? If we put between 62, is this vague range still pointing to the time Paul was in prison in Rome at the time of writing? Those who date the letter 80-200, which I have not seen many commentators in recent years going back to that discussion, would actually say Paul didn't write it, and somebody came after Paul to write the letter, and that person wrote the letter between 80 and 100 A.D. or C.E. This is the problem though when you hold on to that view. I want to tell you before I go further into details later on.

That is to say that within 20 years of Paul's life span, somebody was able to fake Paul, and people who were alive and knew Paul and experienced Paul in his ministry believed it. The rest of the church believed in it and held on to it for almost 1,800 years before some German scholars and British scholars discovered that Paul actually did not write it. Make up your mind on that.

The destination of the letter is an interesting point of conversation. Because this letter was written to Jews and Gentiles, the question has always been, is it written specifically to Ephesus or is it written to the vicinity of Ephesus? It is very likely, and we will discuss this letter more as a letter written to Ephesus and the wider region. Paul had come to Ephesus 18 months after his stay in Corinth.

As we go on to look at Paul coming to this city, working in this city, and later writing to this city, it is good for me to send you to the region where we are talking about. We are talking about Ephesus right here. Remember, it is right there at its shore.

It is a harbor city. Unlike Colossae, which was 120 miles away, Colossae was inland. Ephesus was a harbor city.

I will draw your attention to the fact that it was a prominent major harbor city. Ephesus then became a supplying port for all sorts of places around here. So, think about commerce, trade, and all kinds of activities that will be happening in Ephesus.

Let's get into the issue of authorship. Who wrote Ephesians? Most evangelical scholars argue that Paul wrote Ephesians, as stated at the very beginning of the letter. But I should qualify that none of the scholars who make this argument, including myself, will not actually go as far as to dismiss the argument that those who oppose this view bring forward.

We normally reach the conclusion that Paul wrote this letter after we had assessed the evidence and the counter-argument to our position. That is to render a disclaimer saying I approach this letter as an evangelical scholar. You want to know that the apostolic fathers supported Pauline authorship.

Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Haman, Polycarp, who was the bishop of Smyrna, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian all refer to this letter as a letter written by St. Paul. However, maybe in about two to three hundred years ago, the discussion began to emerge about whether Pauline authorship is actually to be accepted. And scholars who made the observation highlighted three key areas as the basis for the argument.

One is vocabulary. They argue that there are some words in Ephesians that do not appear elsewhere in Pauline letters. And because of that, Paul could not have written this.

Someone who has selected a choice of vocabulary different from Paul wrote Ephesians. Good argument? Not good enough. It may surprise you that if you use vocabulary argument, there is a lot of vocabulary in letters like Philippians that Paul used that he does not use elsewhere.

And yet, Pauline authorship is not disputed. But this has become a major part of the contention on Pauline authorship of Ephesians. The second area those scholars appeal to is the style of writing.

And I'll point out that a little bit more soon. They also touch on the theology of the letter. The theology of the letter is significantly different from a lot of the theological framework of Paul in other letters.

Some of it, yes. Some, no. Paul talks about salvation by grace.

Paul talks about being filled with the Holy Spirit. The moral framework, the virtues and vices in Ephesians, are not any different from the virtues and vices that one will find in Romans, for instance. The way Paul talks about gifts is not so significantly different from what one finds in Romans, for instance.

His virtues and vices are not so different from what one finds in Romans or Galatians. But think about it. Some will say there are some specific words they were looking for Paul to write if Paul wrote Ephesians.

Paul didn't use those words, so Paul didn't write them. I'll concede to that and say it makes sense. What I am not certain about is whether I can say that I expected Paul to write XYZ vocabulary in a letter that he was writing 2,000 years ago.

And if he didn't write those words that I wanted him to write, I am very uncomfortable about that. And I can say I don't believe he did. I'd like to give this illustration.

Perhaps that will help you understand this. I grew up in Ghana. English is not my first language.

In fact, as I learned English, English was my third language at the time. I was struggling to understand this language, English. Through education, by the grace of God, I could claim that I knew some English, even though with a strange accent.

When I'm based in Ghana, and I'm writing, which is my native land, I realize my writing style is different. The vocabulary I use is so influenced by how I literally even translate some words from my mother tongue into English. When I'm back home, I dream in my mother tongue.

So, when I'm writing English, it is really evident to me that the way I write is different. I lived in many places, among which is England. When I was in England, I realized that I write differently.

I use certain expressions. I use certain languages. I began to notice quickly that coming to the United States also made me use the languages of my surroundings.

I use the vocabulary that I hear and use, interact with, refer to things, the things I refer to, and the way we even call the things we refer to. I figured out, coming to the United States, that even though I thought I knew British English, British English and American English are not one and the same. That is to make a point in saying that.

Even with a strange nobody like me, I notice that my surroundings shape the vocabulary I use in my writing. In other words, my surroundings affect my thought pattern, which is later transmitted in my writing. If, for a minute, you would think about what I'm saying and say it makes sense, should it not make sense that Paul uses different vocabulary depending upon the kind of letter he's writing, the kind of people he's writing to, the place from which he writes, the locale, for instance, Ephesus and the region of Ephesus and Colossae are not too far removed from each other.

So, a lot of the vocabulary that we say is so different in Ephesians features in Colossians. Is it not possible that his particular location and his understanding of his readers affect how he communicates with them? I definitely send text messages to so many places a day. Now, thank God for WhatsApp.

I send WhatsApp across the Atlantic. Almost every day, the language I use, the English expressions, some of it will not make sense to my American friends. Those friends over there understood what I meant.

And they will always understand because we are communicating in a language that they understand, that I understand as well. Vocabulary as an issue, style as an issue, and theology as an issue are pointed out as key areas to look at and dispute Pauline's authorship. Some have even gone as far as to say the similarities of the letter and Colossians is evidence that someone picked Colossians.

Depending on Colossians, use the language and theological framework of Colossians to write Ephesians. This argument is hot in non-evangelical circles. This is the reason why you are following this lecture that I am giving today.

If you found anything I have written that was discussed and presented at the Society of Biblical Literature, you may not know my view on this particular subject because I qualify it carefully before I allow the sharks to come and eat me up. Just understand that as simple as this may sound, they are not simple in scholarship. And because you are studious and you have chosen to learn this book with us, you deserve to know this.

Arguments have been made that this letter lacks a personal touch. It doesn't seem to be addressing specific issues. It doesn't seem to have a long list of greetings and greeters.

And so Paul couldn't have written this letter. No. Someone else wrote it and some will go as far as to say something very fascinating.

That contradicts some of the other views. One of the arguments goes like this: Ephesians is so rich.

It's so general. It touches on all the theological themes in Paul. Contrary to those who say it doesn't have the theology of Paul, it touches on all the key issues raised in Paul to the extent that Ephesians is actually someone writing an introduction to all of Paul's letters.

That is interesting, right? Yeah. I would say that could be a good way to put it. That is to say that the person studied all of Paul's letters and say, I like them and I'm hitting on each one of them.

But the other side of the argument is that actually refutes the argument that is given on the lack of Pauline theology in Ephesians. Let me just show you a little bit more about the style issues. When scholars talk about style as a big issue, you want to know that there are three main issues at stake.

There are longer sentences in Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 1, I think from verse 3 or verse 4 to around verse 13, is one sentence, for instance. There are redundancies sometimes.

There are repeated expressions like sins and trespasses. Those kinds of languages should emphasize some things. Some say, ah, that style is not Paul.

Occasionally, there are some lexical and grammatical ambiguities. And some say, oh, Paul wouldn't do that. That is why some argue that Paul didn't write the Ephesians.

But, remember an earlier lecture, I mentioned to you that writing a letter does not mean writing by your hand all the time. In fact, Paul himself indicates that some of

his letters were written by a person like Timothy. Because in ancient notions of authorship, the author could be the one who wrote by his own hand.

He could be the one who detected it, and somebody wrote it. Or he could have done it with co-author. We find that in Paul.

We find Paul writing letters with Silvanus and Timothy. Or, pseudonymous authorship, where somebody writes in the name of another author, is also prevalent in the ancient world. The only thing about that, though, is usually the gap between the name, the fictitious, the author whose name is put on a letter, and the one writing is so vast.

It's not 20 years gap. It's not 50 years gap. Two or three generations should die and not know so that you can come here and pretend to be.

So, in ancient notions of authorship, you have some of this. And, when they talk, and some scholars dispute Pauline authorship to Ephesians, one of the things you want to note here is they want to insist that Ephesians was a forgery. And sometimes, the notion, though unintended in some cases, comes across as if they are disputing the credibility of Ephesians by saying Pauline didn't write it.

It is fictitious. Who are these wacky Christians who believe it and call it the word of God? I don't know if you have already accepted that kind of view or seen people who held those views, but you said, oh yeah, this makes sense to me. For me, some of it makes sense, and some of it does not.

So, as far as the views of authorship in a clear statement, these are the views there. Paul wrote it together with Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon. And he sent the three letters together.

The second view says a disciple of Paul wrote Ephesians, and they wrote it as a generic statement of Paul's teachings. The third view says an admirer of Paul later wrote Ephesians somewhere in the 90s. What view do we assume in this? I gave you a hint earlier on that I assume Pauline authorship as stated in the letter.

I assume that Paul was writing this letter from prison. But if Paul was writing this from prison, which prison was he writing from? Another bone of contention. Some say, oh, he was writing from Ephesus.

He was in prison in Ephesus and writing to the Christians in Ephesus. Very interesting. Some will still say it's Caesarea or Caesarea.

Caesarea. But in modern discussion, most scholars point to Rome as a possible place. This is where it becomes interesting because the more we point to Rome, the more we establish that Paul wrote it, and he wrote it in jail.

So, we are treating this letter as a letter written by Paul from his imprisonment in Rome, like the other letters we are discussing in this particular lecture series. Paul will write this letter to this region. And as he writes this letter to this region, I like what Frank would like to say here.

A colleague that you probably think I like him too much because I like to point out to him. Paul wrote Ephesians near the end of his two-year imprisonment in Rome and at roughly the same time as Colossians and Philemon. I would also like to bring Frank into the discussion because Frank has written one of the latest commentaries on Ephesians that you may find out there.

As far as the destination debate is concerned, it should be noted that until the 1800s, the view that the letter was written to Ephesus was not disputed in scholarship. So, we've gone for almost 1800 or 1700 years for scholars to say we should have questions to raise. We should, however, note a very important point that those who argue about the letter written to Ephesus specifically have to point out.

The expression in Ephesus at the prescript or the introduction of the letter is not found in three very important manuscripts. These are very, very important manuscripts in New Testament studies. The Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, and Chester Beatty Papyri.

The fact that those expressions, that phrase in Ephesus, are not found raises the question as to where specifically this letter was written and when that particular line was taken out of the letter. Was it that it was not there in the beginning because these are quite early manuscripts, or was it that it was there in the beginning, but some people wanted the letter to be applicable to more people, so they started taking that line out. It is very strong evidence to raise questions for us to discuss and think seriously about whether we can make a concrete claim that the letter was written to Ephesus as a specific destination.

Some early fathers like Origen, Basil, Cyprian, and Irenaeus use the text that they refer to as being written to Ephesus. It must be noted, though, that there is no manuscript for Paul. Manuscripts support that there was this circulating manuscript for people to insert things in and all that because one of the views says that somebody wrote Ephesians, didn't insert in Ephesus in there and left a gap so that because such a general letter to cover Paul's teaching if let's say we want to send that letter to Wenham, Massachusetts, we go Wenham, MA or we want to send to London, hey, letter Paul, this is from Paul to the believers in, you insert, London.

We don't have manuscript support for that, and I find that argument, I should say, because we are recording this lecture in the Western context, and I should be very careful how I phrase this. But I'll tell you how I usually put it. I put it as a very, very Western idea, and what I mean by that is this.

That notion seemed to suggest that there was this abundant provision of papers, a printing press in Paul's time, so you print more papers, you create space, and when you get one, just insert something into it. Forgetting that in the ancient world, these manuscripts were written on animal skins and were expensive to provide. Who was going to provide some of this and leave space to say, oh, you pass on somebody, insert something there?

Some of those are presumed almost printing press, almost mentality, but the printing press was not going to be invented until the 15th century. So, what are we talking about? You want to know that it is not a very, very easy argument to be made to say, oh, the letter was written to Ephesus. Let's just take it as it is and go on with it. No, because all these issues I'm outlining to you here are very critical in the way we look at it.

I'd like to present evidence in support of an Ephesus as part of an original manuscript that Clint Arnold presents. The bulk of important manuscripts support an Ephesus as part of an original manuscript, even though some earlier manuscripts did not have it. We don't know why it did not have it, but an earlier and stronger manuscript suggests that it was part of the manuscript.

So, yes, there is support though the other argument is a valid argument. All versions of a stamp manuscript that we have on Ephesians include an Ephesus in the first line. Ignatius of Antioch acknowledged Ephesian destination as early as the latter part of the first century.

So, it is a serious question to be raised but not so serious given that those who were closest to time already looked at this letter and said when the letter reads as Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who were in Ephesus that actually to the saints who were in Ephesus in Ephesus was part of the text originally. One of the things that is clear is that I try to be a reconciling agent, so I like to go by some of these things as a great reconciler. I like to say in some of our meetings let's try to make peace here, and the peace line is this.

Whatever view you hold you can only argue that the letter was written to Western Ishmael. You can't argue beyond that. You can only argue that the letter was written to Ephesus or one of the towns in the Ephesus area of modern-day Turkey.

It is very difficult to make a case; otherwise, it is difficult to establish somewhere else that the letter could have been written. So why is it so difficult for us to accept that

the letter was probably written to Ephesus, which was a major city, with the intent that the letter would also be sent to churches in other parts of the region to read and to understand what Paul has to say to the churches. In other words, why couldn't we accept that Paul was writing this letter to the Christians in Ephesus and in the wider vicinity?

I think it makes sense to me that whether Paul says that or not, they will pass it on anyway. So, saying the letter was written to Western Asia Minor solves all the problems, not discounting the fact that the manuscript evidence supports Ephesus in the text. So, the primary destination could be Ephesus, but the ultimate intention is for the letter to be circulated.

That is why sometimes we refer to this as a secular letter in that sense. The suggested destinations, though, for some scholars, are numerous. Some argue that it was the letter that was written to Laodicea also in Asia Minor.

Some say it was written to Hierapolis in Asia Minor. Some say it was written to Hierapolis alone and not Laodicea and Hierapolis. Some say it was written only to the metro city of Ephesus or the region.

For me it's not a big deal. The letter was written to Ephesus to be circulated to the wider region. It doesn't change, excuse me, it doesn't change our context.

It doesn't change our understanding of geography. It doesn't change our understanding of the religious context that Paul writes to. It doesn't change the religious experience of the people Paul writes to because it will be one and the same.

It is very, very difficult and perhaps impossible to argue that a letter of this kind will go to that part of Asia Minor and it will not land in Ephesus. That reverse argument is going to be very difficult to make. So, let's assume or accept that this letter was written to Asia Minor. I begin to look at Paul in Ephesus.

Paul lived and ministered for about three years in Ephesus. Ephesus was no ordinary town. The population of this city was between 250 to 300,000 people.

In the ancient world, it was one of three major cities, only next to Rome and Alexandria in Egypt. So think about this major city. Paul will write a letter that will go to this city.

As I showed you earlier with the map, this was a port city, and so with the harbor there, there was a high degree of commercial activity in the city. Think about harbor cities. It was also a center of religion and culture.

Harbor cities are not very easy cities to perceive if you have not lived in one. But think about some of the harbor cities you know. Think about San Diego.

Think about New York City. Think about some of these places, but you don't want to know some of the things that happened at night in some of these cities. As a young boy in my 20s, the first church I was given to pastor was in the harbor city of Ghana, Tema.

If you're a senior pastor following this teaching series, may I encourage you not to send your young associates to cities like that. It was challenging to begin with. Ephesus was a harbor city.

Vibrant commercial activity, religious environment, so many religious activities, as I will point out to you in a few minutes. Paul went there. He ministered.

He stayed there. He went sometimes to share the gospel with people. Remarkable things happened while he was there.

Yes, commerce was a big thing there. Culture was a big thing there. As we get in there, you begin to see a major thing happening at this time in Ephesus.

Ephesus was a vibrant religious town. Let me draw your attention to the fact that in today's Western civilization, there is a notion that to be religious means to be less smart. That was not a concept in the ancient world.

I don't know any of the major philosophers that were not religious. Part of my scholarship is to study the work of ancient philosophers and compare them to the work of Paul, especially in the Amora Framework. I am sometimes struck to see how stoic philosophers, in particular, were one of the sharpest thinking groups of the ancient world and how religious they were.

I'm also surprised sometimes to find and read documents about some of these philosophers and how they behave. For instance, some of them sometimes meet in the evening and bring gallons of wine and try to look at who can finish one gallon of wine first. Oh yeah, smart people do that, too.

They are very deeply religious. And so, you have intelligent people yet deeply religious people living and residing in Ephesus and the wider region. I want to suggest to you that talking about being an atheist is not something that people would talk about; even when we think about philosophers like the Epicureans and others, we see some kind of tendency and challenge toward religious activities.

You can't actually characterize them as actually atheists per se. Religion was part of culture, and intellectual activity was not divorced from religion. To be religious and

smart could go hand in hand, unlike our modern thinking that if we want to look down on people who are religious, then we say, oh, they are religious; they are not smart; they are stupid people.

It wasn't like that. It was a post-enlightenment construction. In ancient Ephesus, the mother goddess, the patron deity of the city, was Artemis, Artemis of the Ephesians.

Artemis was a mother god whose shrine and religious rituals formed part of the culture of the city. I'll give you an example. There was a usual procession that would be conducted from one particular location and march all the way to the shrine of Artemis.

In this particular occasion, it's embedded in the rite of passage for young boys to pass from childhood to manhood. On the other side, at the shrine of Artemis, there will be young women who have devoted themselves to this mother goddess, anticipating that with Artemis's help, they will be able to find noblemen who will marry them. So, think about a rite of passage and the fact that, being a Christian, if you don't participate in this rite of passage, there is something wrong with you.

Think about being a young woman who wants someone nice to marry you. In this context, it could be, for the most part, a military guy, a military officer, and occasionally a business person. And the fact that it's not cool because you cannot wait on Artemis, the mother goddess of Ephesus, to help you to be able to give you that decent husband.

Artemis and the shrine of Artemis were so huge; they were the bankhouses of the city. That is where people kept the money. A lot of commercial activities happened.

I'll draw your attention to the Book of Acts where, because of tourism and commercial activity in town, some people made a whole trade out of making the statues, the how do you call it, the images, I was trying to say an English word for statuette or something, the image of Artemis in smaller forms so that people who come in can buy them. When they visit the shrine, they experience the so-called power of the shrine there, and then they take this symbol with them. And somebody is going to be so upset because somebody producing that business is going to become a Christian, and they will not do it anymore.

And somebody is not going to be happy. Luke will tell us. We'll look at some of that in a minute.

The religious climate was a pluralistic contest. There were so many religions and so many shrines in Ephesus. The pervasive influence of Artemis, though, cannot be understated.

She was the patron deity. All the gods in town do not match her. We know that modern archaeologists talk about counting as far as much as 50 different pagan shrines in the ancient city of Ephesus.

That is how many pagan temples were present in the city. Religion was everywhere and anywhere. Oh, you think religion alone? I have a book of this size.

It's called Greek Magical Papyrus. Magic was common. They like to use magic, and as we will see in a few moments, Paul is actually going to minister in this city.

Some people will become Christians, and actually, they will be convicted, and they will give their expensive books of magic to be burned, to be destroyed. That's the same city we are talking about here. This letter will go to a city where you talk about spiritual darkness.

It was real. Astrology was very common as well. Astrology, as a matter of fact, was all over the place around the first century.

Politicians and people of high ranking were more skillful astrologers to be able to tell them about what they were about to do today and how things would play out in the end, and so was it in Ephesus. The evidence is compelling. Clint Arnold has done extensive research on this, and what he finds about this particular city and its religious climate is amazing.

It is in this context that Christianity will be existing. People who believe in one God, people who believe that all these pagan gods are of no use, and they need to be set apart and accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They have to be ready for all the magical assaults, influences of astrology all around them, pagan activities, the rejection that they are not able to participate in some religious rituals.

That's the situation in Ephesus. I draw attention to something interesting too. The kind of pagan shrines that were there.

There was a shrine of Asclepius, the god of medicine. Archaeologists find a shrine of this. This is the shrine.

This is the hospital of the ancient world. In a shrine of Asclepius, you use both religious and evil means to treat diseases. That is to say, if you're a Christian living in Ephesus and you are sick, you just hope that God grants you mercy and heals you.

There was a shrine of the goddess of harvest, wine, and Demeter. This is the goddess and I just want to remind you about some of the rituals on this shrine. One of the rituals on this shrine is to kill animals and have the raw meat eaten with wine.

It is believed that the more you drink, the more you get filled by the power of this God. So, when Paul said later in Ephesians, do not get drunk with wine. Be filled with the spirit.

These guys, they understand. The Artemis of Ephesians. I mentioned it to you a bit.

This patron deity had so much influence, and as I said earlier on, you do have Asclepius, and you do have Aphrodite, the goddess of love in this city. Think about how the city and all these things are going on. Think about sexual promiscuity in this city.

Think about all the issues that will be going on. Think about what it means to live as a Christian and live a pure life. There was what was known as Ephesia Grammata.

Ephesia Grammata were six magical words in the ancient world. And they are known to be so strong and powerful that people from various parts of the world would like to have access to the Ephesia Grammata. In other words, the Ephesian words to use to perform magic.

And that is to give you a clue about how much magic was prevalent in Ephesus. Just in case you're wondering, what are these words? Promise me not to use them. These are the words.

Oh, no. Ascleon, Catascleon, Lyx, Tetrax, Darminius, Eiseon. These are six magical words called Ephesia Grammata.

That was known in the ancient world. And that is to remind us as we study the New Testament that magic was indeed prevalent. When you think about Christianity and you think about spiritual warfare, just for a minute, don't try to convince yourself that the context of those who are going to read Ephesians was a context like, who cares about evil spirits? Who cares? In the Greek Magical Papyri, some people were using magic to charm the nice ladies for love.

So just imagine being a young lady, and you don't have a protective covering. Women are using magic to be able to get their husbands to love them more. Oh, yeah.

We have records of athletes who were trying to use magic to help win some of their race. Yeah. So, when Paul said we are not fighting against flesh and blood, think about yourself in that context before we even look at the book.

Clint Arnold draws our attention about this. A couple of ancient sources relate a story of an Ephesian wrestler competing in the games at Olympia, wearing the Ephesian

letters, Ephesian Grammata, as an amulet on his ankles. He was winning at his event until the amulet was removed, and then he experienced three successive losses.

If you are reading this, what does it tell you? Oh, ancient world, magic works. Magic helps you to win. And if you don't do well, magic can bring you to defeat as well.

So that's a religious climate as far as paganism is concerned. I also want to draw your attention that there were Jews in this city. There was quite a good number of Jews.

The population of Jews in the region was quite big. Jews in Ephesus by this time enjoyed great privileges. We also have evidence, in fact, though the magical tests I study seem to suggest that some Jews were diving into magic too.

They thought it was cool. Now, it was no wonder you see in the book of Acts something that would be very, very interesting, that sons of Sceva, children of a Jewish high priest, when they heard the name Jesus, they thought it's a magical name. So they are going to use it.

And it didn't turn out well. Josephus reminds us about the Jewish presence in Ephesus. In his Antiquities 14, he writes, Hyacinth also sent one of these ambassadors to Dolabella, who was the prefect of Asia and desired him to dismiss the Jews from military services and to preserve to them the custom of their forefathers and to permit them to live according to them.

And when Dolabella had received Hyacinth's letter, without any further deliberation, he sent an epistle to all the Asiatics, and particularly to the city of Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia, about the Jews, a copy of which epistle here follows. In other words, Josephus provides us with data that says there were a lot of Jews in the area, and the Jews were given privileges and concessions for their religious beliefs and customs. We have been talking about religion a lot in Ephesus.

So, let's go to the entertainment culture because it comes out in our Bible. This was a theater in Ephesus by the time of Paul. A theater that sat probably about 25,000 capacity.

Now that you have the understanding of the context of Ephesus, and you do have the vision of how the city would look like, the population, the inter-ethnic Jews and Gentiles in this city, the pagan activities, about 50 pagan temples in the city, the magical involvements, the astrology, and all that. Now that you have that, and you understand there was an entertainment aspect to it, that there was a theater to it, now take your Bible or read this with me from the book of Acts so that we can understand the context of Ephesus. This is how Luke tells us, after this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria.

And with him, Priscilla, and Aquila, he had cut his hair. He was under a vow, and they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. But he himself went into a synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

In other words, there was a Jewish presence. When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them, he said, I'll return to you if God wills.

And he set sail from Ephesus. And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. Luke writes, there he found some disciples, and he said to them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said, no, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.

Jumping to verse 6, when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about 12 men in all. Chapter 19, verse 11 onwards, and God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that he had touched that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them, and the evil spirit came out of them.

This was all in Ephesus. And look at this. Some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, I adjoin you by the name of Jesus, whom Paul proclaims.

Sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them: Jesus, I know, and Paul, I recognize, but who are you? And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them, and overpowered them, and so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Wow.

And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. I told you they were both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled, and a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books, I told you about magic, and burned them in the sight of all.

They counted their value, and they found that it came to 50,000 pieces of silver. So, the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail. I have tried to bring you to the contest of Ephesus, and I have established so far in our introduction to Ephesians that Paul wrote Ephesians, even though the issue of authorship is being debated.

I also explained to you that I hold that Paul wrote Ephesians to Ephesus and its wider vicinity. I reminded you about the contest, the social, commercial, religious, and political contest of Ephesus. It was a harbor city, a vibrant city, full of religious activity, paganism all the place, magical activities, and sorceries.

And I drew your attention to the fact that in this contest, Paul spent a significant amount of time doing ministry. Jews were here. Gentiles were here.

And from Luke's account in the book of Acts, you probably noticed that Luke reminded you that indeed Ephesus was a major city. Jews and Gentiles were there. There was pagan activity.

There were even professional exorcists who moved around to try to cast out devils from people. And they thought they could do that in the name of Jesus Christ until they met a guy who beat them up. The Bible says they went running naked.

No good news. As you think about this contest, think about this book called Ephesians. And I urge you, before we come back to the next discussion on Ephesians, to take time to read the six chapters of Ephesians at a sitting with this background in mind.

And when we come back, we'll pick up from there and begin to look at this rich material written to Christians in such a challenging and yet exciting contest, a place where God could be glorified, a place where the power of God could be so really seen, a place where people will see God do great things, not only as recorded in the book of Acts, but as Paul anticipates in obedience to what he writes to the church. Thank you for beginning these lectures on Ephesians. I hope you enjoy it and you actually become a lover of this book.

Thank you again. God bless you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 18, Introduction to Ephesians.