

Ephesus: sustained teaching and contested loyalties

Why was Ephesus important in Paul's mission?

Ephesus became a sustained center of Paul's teaching and a place where allegiance to Christ affected public life and economic interests. Acts and 1 Corinthians connect the city with a wider regional mission; the destination of Ephesians remains a separate question.

A ministry that takes time

After an earlier brief visit, Acts describes extended teaching in Ephesus, including discussion in the hall of Tyrannus. Its summary of the message reaching Asia concerns the Roman province, not the modern continent. Paul's presence supports a wider mission, but the text does not document every missionary journey or identify Paul as personally visiting every community in the region.

Biblical references: Acts 18:19-21 · Acts 19:1-10

Sources: acts

Faith and material interests

The account of Demetrius and the silversmiths shows a conflict involving the cult of Artemis, civic identity, and income. Acts also recounts repudiation of magical practices. These scenes should not be flattened into hostility toward every Ephesian or every official: the town clerk acts to disperse the assembly. Conversion has public consequences, while local people respond in different ways.

Biblical references: Acts 19:18-41

Sources: acts

Letters and pastoral responsibility

First Corinthians identifies Ephesus as Paul's present location. Acts later locates his farewell to Ephesian elders at Miletus, not inside Ephesus. The letter called Ephesians has a debated destination because some early witnesses omit the city name, and its authorship is disputed. Keep those questions distinct from the well-attested ministry setting. Christ-centered teaching calls for patient formation and care that protects the vulnerable.

Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 · Acts 20:17-38 · Ephesians 1:1

Sources: letters, acts, brown

Sources

- [acts] Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section. <https://ebible.org/web/ACT.htm>
- [letters] Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section. <https://ebible.org/web/>
- [brown] Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament (Doubleday, 1997), chapter 28, “To Whom and By Whom?”.

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