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Ephesians (Overview) - Part 1



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

Delve into the depths of Ephesians with Steve Gregg as he provides a comprehensive overview of this profound New Testament book. Gregg highlights Ephesians as one of Paul's loftiest theological works, exploring its heavenly perspectives and rich revelations. He discusses the possible origins of the letter, noting its notable stylistic differences from Paul's other epistles. Gregg explores the themes of unity within the body of Christ, the mystery of God's design for the church, and the armor of God as symbols of spiritual warfare, providing insightful commentary along the way.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to be looking at the book of Ephesians, and as usual we'll have a thorough introduction and then a brief survey of the book. The introduction covers an awful lot of what's in the book in the course of introducing the book, but we still like to see the flow of thought after we've had the introductory material. So the book of Ephesians is sometimes referred to as the Queen of Epistles, and I remember when I was young hearing it was sometimes called the Alps of the New Testament.

All these superlative names for the book of Ephesians have been given, and yet it's, you know, you might say it's just one of the many epistles of Paul, and not the longest, maybe not even the most helpful, I don't know. But it's that the theology of Paul is taken to a higher level in Ephesians than just about anywhere else. I think Colossians comes closest to being similar to it, but Ephesians is higher still.

It's just that Paul has had revelations, and he speaks of them in the book. He has received revelation about the mystery of Christ, he said, and this is where he tries to lay it out. Now, he prays in the book, in the first three chapters, twice he breaks away and prays for the readers that they will be able to understand this stuff, and that God will give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of him.

And in other words, Paul's not actually convinced that even he who knows his material very well, that he's not necessarily going to be able to impart it effectively to people, unless God gives them the same spirit of revelation that Paul himself has received, and

he prays for that. So we see that Paul is getting into the heavenly places here and to hire loftier things, and that's why it's called the Alps of the New Testament, sometimes because it's the loftiest peaks of theological revelation and Paul's writings and frankly, anyone else's either. So we're looking at one of the shorter epistles, but one that's packed densely with spiritual truth of great value.

And so I want to give you a lot of introductory information so that you'll be able to approach the book in a way that's going to be helpful to you. There are some things about the book that are difficult for scholars, and I guess it would be difficult for us. We were not scholars.

If we're scholarly, have to know about the difficulties. I mean, I have to say that when I first taught the Bible, the very first time Ephesians is the book I chose. I'm not sure why I was only sixteen years old.

I never taught any book of the Bible. I was meeting every day at lunchtime at Orange High School with the Jesus people there. We're just discussing the Bible together every day at lunchtime, and they said, well, would you be willing to teach a Bible study here instead of just sitting around talking? Would you be willing to teach a study? I'd never done it.

I wasn't sure I could. I didn't really. I had no experience or instruction on how to teach, but I read the Bible a lot for a person that age.

And I thought, OK, and I just thought, well, I'll do what I hear done at Calvary Chapel at Calvary Chapel. They were, which is where I was going every night. They had verse by verse teaching, which simply meant you read a few verses and make comments on it.

If you have something to say about it and then read some more and do the same. And I thought, well, I could do that because the material itself carries the message. And I don't have any insightful to say.

I don't say anything at all. Just keep reading more verses. That's what Chuck did and the others.

So I started and chose Ephesians. And I guess that shows how inexperienced I was because I wasn't even experienced enough to know that Ephesians is one of the harder books to grasp. I didn't know the difference in those terms, Corinthians or Romans or Ephesians or Galatians or Timothy.

I didn't realize I was picking one of the more difficult books. I had no idea what I said because most of what I'm going to tell you today, I didn't know at the time. I've learned mostly in the past 50 years of studying the Bible.

I've learned a lot of things that I didn't know at all. So I don't know what I said. I don't

know what insight I had, but apparently it went well because when we finished, they wanted me to take another book.

We kept going and I've been teaching nonstop ever since. But one thing I didn't know is that in the most ancient manuscripts of the book of Ephesians, the words in Ephesus are not found in verse one of chapter one. That's kind of important because although our book has the title, the epistle of Paul, the apostles to the Ephesians, Paul didn't name it that.

That's the name that was given when all the books were collected after Paul and the other apostles were dead. They were given names like this, and so the church always called this the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, but the books themselves do not. They don't have names like that, and in this case, in most cases, we know who it's written to because he said to the churches of Galatia to the saints in Rome to the church in Corinth and so forth is usually in the opening verses.

And as you look at Ephesians one one Paul and apostle Jesus Christ Bible of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus. So that's why we don't see it to the Ephesians. However, the oldest manuscripts do not have the words in Ephesus, but they simply read to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus without naming any particular venue that sent to now later manuscripts all seem to have.

In Ephesus, but the earliest ones that the later ones were copied from do not. As late as the fourth century origin, and I think Jerome were origin in the third century and Roman fourth century. There was a heretic in the second century, about one fifty AD, named Marcello.

And although he's a heretic, one thing he did is he put together a canon of New Testament books. There was not yet an official can and not not not an official list that the church to come up with, but he didn't like all of the books. But he did like all the people like the book of Luke.

So he put his own limited can of the New Testament and with this, he had this book in it, but he called it the official Paul to the lay of the sea. Now, we don't have any manuscripts that have to the lay of the sea, and so it's not known why Marcy on thought it was to the latest. Though Marcia was a heretic, there's nothing in his doctrine or the doctor of the book that would make him choose the latest in the decisions just to twist something.

It's probable that he thought it was the book to the latest in since it didn't have a venue mentioned, and because a book written at the same time, Colossians makes reference to an epistle related to lay in his field. And I think Marcia assumed that that this was that a pistol because it didn't have a place in it in the manuscript in Colossians chapter four. We find that Paul is closing things down.

He says in verse sixteen. Now, when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the latest in the church of the latest in and that you likewise read the epistle from lay to see a. Now, the pistol from lay to see it. He's not saying that lay to see it wrote an epistle that he's recommending.

And and it's not like he's in late writing a pistol to them to read it. It sounds like there was, in addition to the letter that he wrote to the Colossians, another letter which was circulating probably from church to church, like the book of Revelation did. The book of Revelation, as we know, is a circulating epistle because of written to the seven churches of Asia.

And the first one was at the last one was late to see it. And if you if you trace the listing of the churches in the book of Revelation, you see that emphasis was the southwestern most city. And as you trace the cities in order to measure, it goes northward, then cuts over east and comes down like a horseshoe shape.

And later, see, it is the last church listed. So it's assumed reasonably enough that when revelation is written, is written to all these churches, so it is delivered to emphasis and then Smirnoff. I assume he's smart and then I tire and purpose and lazy, you know, both.

I mean, I started from Philadelphia to see it. So it apparently revelation was a pistol that was sent around to those cities in Asia. And it's possible that Paul also had written a circulating epistle and that later, he was the first church to read it.

And this was to pass it on to Colossian. And it would make the rounds to. And so that would mean it the epistle in question was coming to Colossians from Laodicea.

And we know nothing else about that epistle from Laodicea. So, since it is very similar to Colossians, Ephesians is thought maybe to be that epistle. It was apparently written at the same time spent at the same time.

Both epistles were delivered by the same person. Ticket is mentioned at the end of each of these two epistles as the one delivering it. So some people may think that that this epistle from the latest scenes is this epistle that we call Ephesians.

It's not really necessarily associated with Laodicea. It's not what was written to Laodicea. But if it was written to a bunch of churches in the region, Laodicea may have had it first.

And then they've been passed to Colossians. So it may have if it if it followed a reverse arc to the direction that the revelation did from Ephesus up and around to Laodicea. If this letter went the other direction, certainly a scene going up around, it may have ended up in Ephesus.

It may be that the epistle eventually was just preserved in Ephesus. Once all the churches had read it or made their own copies to keep it, the original ended up in

Ephesus. And then it just came to be associated with that church because it was in their library.

And then sometime later, they just got the letter to the Ephesians. This is only a theory. No one knows for sure.

But we can say that it's very likely that the letter was a circulating epistle. That's not every scholar's opinion. Different scholars have different opinions.

I think this is the best, at least the one that strikes me as the best. But it does not say to Ephesus. So we can't really say this letter was essentially written to Ephesus.

And it seems very likely it was not specifically written to Ephesus for a number of reasons. One, Ephesus is the city where Paul had spent the most time of any church. Paul didn't live after his conversion in any one place as long as he lived in Ephesus.

He spent the second longest time in Corinth, but he was only 18 months in Corinth. But according to Acts chapter 20 in verse 31, he spent three years in Ephesus. That's in Acts 20, 31.

That's twice as long as in Corinth. And as far as we know, Corinth was the second longest. Even when Paul was in prison for years, he only spent two years in Caesarea.

Then he was moved to two years in Rome before his trial. And in Antioch, he was only about a year in Antioch before he traveled from there on his first missionary journey. So we don't really have Paul settling down, letting any moss grow under his feet, as it were, or grass grow under his feet, as they say.

But Ephesus was the place more than any other that Paul spent some time. In fact, it says in the book of Acts that the three years that Paul spent in Ephesus, he spent sending out or reaching out himself to different other places in Asia. Asia Minor, which is presently Turkey, is where Ephesus was.

And it says that all of Asia heard the gospel during the time that Paul was in Ephesus. It wasn't all through his mouth. He must have made forays out to different cities and evangelized some of them.

But we know Colossae, which is one of those cities, was not evangelized by Paul, but by Epaphroditus, a man that Paul apparently sent to them to evangelize them. So Paul may have set up a hub in Ephesus and sent out his companions to other cities so that all Asia was evangelized during those three years. But that means that Paul really got to know this church well.

And we know that we have, as Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, thinking he would never see these people again, he called the elders of the Ephesian church to him in

Miletus and gave a speech that's recorded in Acts, Chapter 20. It's there that we read that he had been there for three years previously, but it's Acts 20, verses 17 through 35, and it's a very emotional speech, so emotional, it says that they're all weeping at the end of his speech. He was very intimate with these people.

I mean, he would be after living in their church for three years. The interesting thing is that the letter we call Ephesians is not intimate at all. In fact, it is the least personal of all his epistles.

He mentions no people by name that he knows there. He doesn't send any greetings. He makes no reference to any circumstance in their church, which is very much unlike his epistles.

Most of his epistles are written to address some crisis or some situation that's going on in the church that needs his attention. He doesn't mention anything about the local church and what's going on. And again, if the words in Ephesus are not in it, he didn't mention which local church he had in mind.

This impersonal nature of it has led most scholars to believe that he couldn't possibly have been writing this letter to Ephesus, since he's much more personal to all the other churches he writes to, including Colossians and Romans, where he had never been to those churches. He'd never been to Colossians, never been to Rome, but he wrote greetings to people he knew there and gave personal information about his travels and things like that, as if there's people that he knew in those cities that he'd never been to. But he spent so much time in Ephesus and doesn't send any such greetings to them.

So it's a peculiarity of the book, and this is here to be a problem in the book. If it was written to Ephesus, why doesn't he say hello to anybody they knew? They knew he was close to them. And this, again, gives the impression that it's a circulating epistle, not to any one church in particular.

He made it generic so that it could go to all these different churches and it wouldn't, you know, no one would be left out. It was like something that quite everybody. And that is probably the case.

It is also the case that it doesn't really, I mentioned, doesn't address any situations in the church. It doesn't even argue against any particular heresy. You know, the Galatians and the Colossians, even Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians.

They all the books of Timothy and Titus, they all have certain heretics they're seeking to refute. You're right. He's running partly to correct bad doctrines.

He doesn't have he doesn't mention any heresies to his readers here. It's devoid of all argumentation. He's not trying to prove anything.

It's more like he just declares that his whole style of writing is very much different, especially in the first three chapters, which are. You know, I suppose it's not argumentation like his other epistles are more lyrical. More like a long poem or a long devotional prayer.

Some commentators said all of chapters one through three is one long prayer. That's not quite correct, because he does interrupt his praying a few places to get a few doctrinal notes, but he doesn't argue for them. But it's all devotional.

It's not it's not compact and tightly reasoned like most of his writings are. It's more diffuse. And that's particularly true, of course, in the first three chapters.

And that's because the first three chapters, like is as is the case in many of Paul's epistles, is the first part of the epistle is theological. And the second part of the epistle is practical. This is true in Colossians.

This is true in Romans. This is true in Galatians. It's very commonly Paul's way of writing that he lays out theology at the beginning to make sure they have the right information and the right beliefs.

And then he talks about how they have to live so that he shows in this case, as in Colossians and in a few other places, just about equal interest in them, having good doctrine as in them living a godly life. But we see then that, you know, he doesn't write this in a personal way and he doesn't even write it in a theologically argumentative way. And so we can just read it.

It's obvious this is a very different tone than the than any of his other epistles. It is specifically to Gentiles that he's writing, but we don't know in what locations, but the whole region of Asia, which is probably where it was circulating, was a Gentile region. There were Jews in every church, of course, because when Paul went and evangelized bridges like that, he went first synagogue and evangelized.

What few Jews might be open to him? Usually the Jews were not very open to him and he get run out of the synagogue. Then the Gentiles would come to him. And so usually in each of these churches, there's a small number of Jewish people that were one out of the synagogues and then a much larger representation of Gentiles.

This is a very strong Gentile region. And so he speaks to readers as if they are Gentiles. He mentions the Jews, but he does so primarily in order to tell the Gentiles that you are no longer alienated from Jews.

Before you were Christians, you were, you know, you didn't have God. You were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. You've been a stranger to the covenants that the Jews had.

But now all that's changed. Now you're in the covenant. Now you're in Israel.

Now you have God. So although he mentions the Jews and the difference, he does so only to emphasize that the Jews have no more privileges than the Gentiles do any longer. And you can see he's writing to Gentiles.

For example, in chapter 2, verse 11, he says, Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, were called uncircumcision by what is called circumcision made by, made in the flesh by hand. That is, the Jews who call themselves the circumcision refer to you Gentiles as the uncircumcision. And you used to be that you used to be Gentiles before you were Christian.

Now, of course, racially, they were still Gentiles. We need to realize that Jew and Gentile, it's a racial designation. But once people are in Christ, it's no longer relevant designation.

There's no Jew or Gentile male or female bond or free in Christ. You lose racial and gender identity. That's the interesting thing.

So, so contrary to our modern society where your racial identity and your gender identity are almost like the only thing that matters. It's like everything else has to be sacrificed to how you identify in your gender or or at least what race you belong to. If you're a you know, if you're a person of color, as opposed to part of the white supremacist majority and all that.

I mean, this is how children are being taught to think in our culture that your race and your gender are the most important identity features about you. Paul's makes it very clear. No, actually, neither of those things are important.

Maybe before before you're a Christian being Jew or Gentile, those that's a racial distinction. Be male or female. All the different privileges, but in Christ, all are one.

And all those the thing Paul's mainly talking about here is your identity is in Christ. And we'll talk about that as his key thought here. Your identity is not Jew or Gentile or something else.

On the other hand, of course, people still are Jewish or Gentile just racially. It's like if we have a church where there's some Chinese people and some Vietnamese people and some Guatemalan people and some Nicaraguan people and some Kenyans and some Nigerians and some Swedish and some Germans. You've got all these different races who say your racial identity doesn't make any difference whatsoever to God.

But we could still say that there are white Christians and black Christians and Asian Christians and so forth. Hispanic Christians, because that's simply a fact. We're not saying that is that that's as if their race is important, but we don't forget.

I mean, we you can talk about such things as realities because they're just not theologically important. So Paul's not denying that there are Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. You said it in Christ.

You're neither Jewish or Gentile as far as I go. Christ is your identity, not your race. Now, not only in Chapter 2, verse 11, but also Chapter 4, verse 17.

He brings up that he has a Gentile audience in mind, primarily in Chapter 4, verse 17. This, I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind. OK, you're Gentiles and the rest of the Gentiles are pagans.

You're Gentile Christians, so you don't walk the way the rest of the Gentiles do. So it's clear that he has in mind that he's got a message primarily for Gentile believers. And he makes a point of saying so.

That's not because he's distinguishing between Jews and Gentiles, but because he's got a message to them. You aren't distinguished anymore from the Jews as formerly identified Gentiles. You're now identifying in Christ, which is true of all believing Jews as well.

So the racial distinctions are no value or no consideration to God at all. Now, there's been some not not as many. I mean, a lot of a lot of scholars are convinced that the letter was not originally written to Ephesus.

That seems almost universally recognized by scholars, both conservative and liberal. The more liberal scholars also doubt Paul's authorship. But, of course, liberals do that all the time.

Liberals try to doubt all the traditional authorship of almost everything and late date all the books. But even some conservatives have, but not very conservative, in my opinion, have taken the view that Paul might not be the author. Again, they say there's things different about this than Paul's other letters, including vocabulary and style, which is true in measure.

But they say one theory that is often brought up. I don't put any merit in it all, but you'll hear frequently from teachers on Ephesians that maybe Ephesians was not written by Paul, but by one of his disciples at the time, perhaps around the fourth century, when or who knows when, when Paul's letters were gathered together before the fourth century, certainly maybe the second century. Paul's letters were being gathered together into a collection and to sort of as an introduction to the collection.

Somebody wrote a Pauline like epistle, somebody who is a student of Paul, who had all the same opinions Paul had. And they wrote a letter in his name as if it was him and that this is that. And that would explain why the style was not exactly like Paul's other

epistles style.

And so they would doubt that Paul wrote it, but they would not. They would not doubt that Paul would agree with it. They believe he was dead and that somebody who was a great student of Paul and who held Paul's views wrote a letter in his name that has these stylistic differences.

But liberals make these kinds of claims a lot. They claim that second Peter is not written by Peter. You know that the pastoral epistles, Timothy and Titus, are not written by Paul.

And what they're saying is some liar claiming to be Paul or claiming to be Peter wrote these epistles. But they wrote in telling people to be honest and to be holy and to be righteous and to be, you know, all the things that Christians should be, which is everything but being a liar. You know, if I wrote a letter to the church and pretended that I was Billy Graham writing the letter, you know, and issued it in his name, I'd be a forger.

I'd be a fraud. My letter would be of no value, even if I had good things to say. The very fact that I lied about who I am at the very outset and deceive people would simply undermine any credibility of the whole thing.

And, you know, when liberals say, well, sometimes people did that kind of thing. The name of Peter and Paul, and yet it would be such an elaborate hoax if they did, because in these letters with the set of visions, but certainly the pastoral epistles and second Peter. There are many references to Peter's own experience to his experience of a matter of transfiguration, things like that, which someone just be writing an elaborate.

Also, if they're not really Peter and say, with a right to pause me. Also, there's something that has led many to feel like it couldn't have been written by anyone other than Paul, because. They have Paul saying in Chapter three and verse eight.

This is to me who am less than the least of all the saints. This grace is given that I should preach among the Gentiles that that Paul might write. I am the least of all things is realistic.

All set in First Corinthians 15. You know, I'm the last to be called to be a boss. I don't even deserve to be an apostle because I first get his church.

And in Timothy, he says, you know, I was the chief of sinners. I'm the chief of sinners and I persecuted the Church of God and I was injurious and evil. I mean, Paul can say those things about himself, but some fan of his making up a letter.

Stick something as diminishing of him in that. What what what person who had Paul as their hero, pretending to rise him would put such a diminishing thing. I'm the least of all.

He didn't even say the apostles. I'm the least of all saints, the least of all Christians. It's

pretty safe.

Obviously, no fan of Paul would write that. Paul might write it, but no one who is a fan of his would write that in his name as if it was him. So the stylistic difference, I want to talk a little bit about this, because if you read all the Paul's epistles, you may be attentive enough to recognize some serious differences in the style.

This letter is written more like a sermon than a letter. Again, a letter has got more personal reason. You say hello to people.

If you have friends, please greet them by name. Paul does this. This is written more like a sermon.

And it's the doctrinal portion, which is the first three chapters is more lyrical than it is polemical. It's not arguing for anything. It declares doctrinal things, but it's not trying to prove them.

It's just a God revealed this to me. This is the mystery that God revealed to me. He's not arguing that it's more logical or more supported by Old Testament scripture.

That's how Paul usually, when he's arguing against heretics, he'll make his point against them. And he'll argue like in 1 Corinthians 15 from logic for the resurrection of the dead and things like that. But here he just declares it.

He declares it as something that he knows because God showed it to him and expects people to take his word for it. There's another aspect of this I didn't mention. And that is that it sounds funny, right? That he doesn't know these people, which is another reason to believe he didn't write the Ephesians.

Now, if you read it through a group of churches, including some where he did know the people. But let's say most of the churches he had not been to, then he might talk this way. But in chapter one, verse 15, he says, therefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks to you.

So I heard of your faith in Jesus. And I heard that your believers, you know, it's like he wouldn't say that to the Ephesians, whom he'd lived with after planning for three years. Yes, some years running this later, maybe this would be running it maybe 20 years later, 10 years later.

Yeah, he'd be. I've heard you as a Christian. You know, you went right to your home church and speak that way to them.

Also, in chapter three and verse two, he says, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me for you. If you've heard of my ministry, if you've heard the kind of ministry I have, you may have heard of me. You may

know some of this about me if you've heard of it.

And yet it was the Ephesians. He lived with them. They knew his ministry.

They didn't hear about it. They viewed it. They saw it.

And so these are some of the factors in the book that make it seem strange for Paul to write. If he's writing to the Ephesians with whom he was actually quite intimate. But one thing you'll notice, and you'd notice it even more if you're reading in the Greek original is how long some of the sentences are.

There's a sentence in chapter one that is like 12 or 13 verses long. Now, in a good translation, it there's no period in that because Paul didn't use any periods. Now, in some of the translations that try to dumb things down for the reader, like the Living Bible or the Living New Living Translation or whatever, the more the more readable an English translation is trying to be, the more they break this section down into smaller sentences.

I think the I think the Living Bible breaks these this long sentence down into 13 verses, 13 short verses is a really long sentence. And I don't know, I forget the NIV breaks it down into, you know, I don't remember how many 67 sentences, something like that with periods at the end. But in chapter one, verses three through 14, there are no periods between chapter three and chapter the end of 14.

It's one long sentence, which makes it a little difficult, makes it intriguing, though, because a long sentence like that is full of subordinate clauses where one clause is explaining or give more information about what was just said before, which itself might be part of a clause that saying something about before it. And it's a little hard. I remember many years ago going through that sentence and trying to trace it back from the last thing in it, back to how it started.

Now, all the all the things that went through to get there. It's intriguing enough. If people don't like to spend time with the Bible, don't like to study it hard, they probably find it annoying.

But for someone who really likes to dig in, it's these long sentences, you realize that Paul's just he's on a roll. He's on a roll. He's not even thinking about making his senses compact and understanding.

Just he just is a flow of consciousness with him. And the longest sentence in it is chapter one, verses three through 14. There's another long one in the same chapter versus 15 through 23.

That's also quite a long sentence. Chapter one, verses 15 through 23. Chapter two, verses one through nine is a single sentence.

And chapter three, verses one through seven. Those are four very long sentences. They're all in the first three chapters, which is where Paul's rhapsodizing about what we have in Christ and who Christ is and how wonderful our inheritance is and so forth.

He's rhapsodizing. He doesn't take a breath very often. He goes long, long, long.

Then he takes a breath and he starts another one. And so that's a very different. None of his other epistles really have that style, although there's some small sections in Romans and in Colossians.

Colossians chapter one, verses 12 through 22 is a long sentence, although much of it is believed to be quoting from some kind of an ancient creed. Also in Romans, chapter one, verses one through six and chapter eight, verses 32 through 39. You may recognize that latter in Romans 8, 32, for various purposes, which will separate from the God.

I'm not that long list of stuff. It just goes on and on and on. But it's like, what is that? Eight verses in one sentence.

So for Paul, that long sentence is not unknown in his other epistles, though it's rare. And but here it's it's characteristic in this particular epistle, which is one of the things that makes it different in style. As far as the vocabulary goes, you can't really make much of vocabulary.

There are differences in it. For example, there are 80 Greek words in Ephesians that are not found in any of Paul's other epistles. But that's not that remarkable.

He's talking about some different things. For example, the armor of God, some of the pieces of armor has special Greek names that he doesn't have any reason to bring them up in the other epistles. We're not talking about them when you have different subject matter.

The vocabulary isn't always going to be the same of these 80 words that are not found in any of his other epistles. There are 42 of them are not found in any other part of the New Testament. In fact, they're they're single occurrences in the Bible.

Forty two of the words in this epistle. But again, if that sounds like, well, if Paul wrote it, how could he use any of these words in his other epistles? It's not unusual, not unusual for Paul to have a number of words in any of his epistles that aren't in any of the others. Some of these words are are words that come from the same stem as as other words that are in his other epistles.

In a few cases, there's just such common Greek words that anyone might use them in the first century, even if they aren't used in every correspondence. They're kind of your common words. I mean, it's like to say, OK, this can't be written by Paul because there's this many words that aren't found in his other epistles.

How many words would there be that you might use in writing to one person that you wouldn't use in the same letter in a letter to the same person or a different person somewhere else? I mean, if you look at everything I've ever written and in one of them, I mentioned something about ice cream. Well, Steve couldn't have written this because he doesn't mention ice cream in any of his other correspondences. Well, maybe there's no occasion to mention it in the other.

It's like this is the kind of stuff that people sometimes use when they're trying to prove that someone other than Paul wrote it. Look how many unique words there are that he doesn't. It's not really significant.

I mean, it doesn't prove anything against Paul's ownership. One thing about Ephesians, and this is something that should be noted by everybody, is that it's the one epistle where he never speaks of the local church, even though the whole epistle is about the church. You see, when Paul writes the Corinthians, he writes to the church in Corinth.

He writes the Romans, he's writing to the saints in Rome. When he writes to the Galatians, there's churches in Galatia. He addresses these are local churches in certain towns.

He doesn't mention any particular local church here. In fact, this is the only epistle where every time he mentions the church, it's referring to the global church. That's a phenomenon scholars would call it Catholic city from the word Catholic.

The word Catholic should not be confused with Roman Catholic. The word Catholic before there were Roman Catholics, before there was such a thing as the Roman Catholic Church, the mainstream church was called the Catholic Church. The word Catholic just means universal.

There's one church universally throughout the whole world, the global community of saints, the disciples of Jesus taken collectively worldwide are the one body of Christ, the one temple of the one church, and that's what we talk about the whole church. We are saying things about that might not be true of any given local church. For example, in Ephesians four, Paul says that Christ gave the church apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers.

But what every local church have apostles and prophets. Some think they'd like to, and there are churches that are trying to work that out to have apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, what they call the fivefold ministry of them. But Paul doesn't say every local church is going to have apostles.

Some will, some won't. But the whole church does. Christ has built his church, he says in Ephesians two, on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

The whole church globally, which started in the first century, the foundation was laid by

the apostles and prophets for the two thousand years since. And that same organism has been growing, but we don't need to have the foundation laid over and over again by new apostles and new prophets necessarily. So Paul is doesn't really talk anywhere in this epistle about local churches at all.

And that shouldn't be surprising. That's one thing I like about Ephesians. It talks about the whole church and a local church is simply a small sampling of the whole church in every town, wherever, anytime that has been evangelized.

There's Christians there who are a sampling of the global church there. The global church is comprised of true disciples of Jesus have been born again. And there are people like that in every locality that's been evangelized and in every denomination that I know of.

Now, there might be some denominations that are so cultic, there's not a single real Christian in them. But there are denominations as different as Pentecostal and Methodist and Presbyterian and Lutheran and Episcopal and Roman Catholic, where there are some true Christians who are fellowship in those local assemblies. But the true church is made up of only true Christians, the local church.

You can't always say that about in any local church. There might be pretenders. You don't know, because the local church is identified by identifiable warm bodies, which you can't really test if they're born again or not.

You know, there might be some evidence there should be in a true Christian side that should be obvious that you're born again. But there could be people you're not so sure about, but they're in the church anyway. And maybe they're not even safe.

That means, of course, that everyone in any local church who's really safe is part of the global Catholic universal church. And anyone in a local church who's not really safe, they may be part of that local church, but they're not part of a true church. They're not really part of the body of Christ because they're not born again.

And I wrote the site. So the constituency of the true church, the global true church made up of real Christians on the one hand, and the constituency of any local church, there's really overlap, but they're not going to be have the same boundaries. If you could draw two circles, one is a big circle.

It's the global church and another smaller circle, but kind of intersects it. Some of that circles in the true church and some of the outside the true church, because you can't really be sure about when you meet actual individuals. You can't know for sure if they're really Christians, but we know that there are real Christians and God knows who they are.

When God looks at the world, he sees one body of Christ that's made up of Christians in

every part of the world. It's a global phenomenon. And that's the only way Paul talks about the church in Ephesians.

He talks about local churches and their behaviors and their administrations and so forth in his other epistles. But Ephesians is different and its main subject is the church. It's the church epistle.

Paris wants. There's no other church, no other epistle or any other book of violence. Says such lofty and insightful things about the nature of the church as Ephesians.

In this, it's a lot like, well, it's not in this particular case, but it does have things in common with two other epistles. Primarily, one of those is first Peter and the other is Colossians. I'm not going to say much about first Peter, because eventually we're going to get to first Peter here.

Now, I have reason to point these things out. I believe first Peter is strongly influenced by Ephesians. We know that Peter knew of Paul's epistles and consider them scripture, because in second Peter, chapter three and verses 15 and 16, Peter refers to Paul's epistles.

And he says in all of his epistles, he speaks of these things that Peter's talking about. So he's aware of lots of Paul's epistles that he apparently has read. He actually says some things in them are hard to understand.

Apparently, Peter didn't understand easily some things Paul wrote, but he was familiar with the epistles. He called them scripture, actually. That being so, it shouldn't surprise us that when he wrote first Peter, it followed very closely the outline of Ephesians.

There's a great deal parallel there. I think the notes I've given you might have a listing of some of them. I'm not sure if I left that in there or not.

I'm not going to discuss those because we'll wait till we get to first Peter to bring them out. But there's a lot of things in first Peter. And I noticed this first when I was actually studying first Peter years ago.

I thought, well, here and here and here and here and here and here all the way through. He's saying things parallel to Ephesians, which, you know, if people have a real supernaturalistic idea of how the Bible is inspired, like these people were just locked into a trance and the Holy Spirit just dictated. We might say, well, it's just the Holy Spirit gave the same points to Peter as he did to Paul.

It's just that easy. But we know that that's not the way the writers of the epistles did not claim that that was happening. They didn't think in a trance or that the Holy Spirit was just kind of vibing through them and giving them the words directly.

Right. They they they studied. I mean, Luke said that he could write the story of Jesus because he'd studied.

He'd researched it. He talked to the witnesses. He'd read other books.

I mean, he's he's not claiming that he's writing a book of Luke by automatic writing and that it's just, you know, just the Holy Spirit and no no Luke involved in it. And likewise, the epistles never make any such claims for themselves. It's interesting, Paul in Ephesians three, when he started the mystery of Christ, he says in verses two through four, he says, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given to me for you, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before a few words by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ.

Now he's saying, I'm telling you, I'm going to explain the mystery of Christ. And I hope you can appreciate the fact I know this subject. Well, I hope you recognize I really have understanding of this mystery.

Now, he could have said, I hope you understand that the Holy Spirit is just putting every word I'm writing on the paper. It wouldn't have anything to do with what he understood. It could just bypass his understanding altogether.

I'm writing from what God has revealed to me. So it's divine information. But I'm I'm writing from my knowledge of the subject.

And as far as we know, that's the only way that people wrote epistles. We don't have any writer of the epistles saying, OK, the Holy Spirit is coming on me now. Give me a piece of give me a pen.

Give me some parchment quickly, because I want to catch this while the Holy Spirit doing this to me. Now, they knew what they do because the Holy Spirit had revealed it to them. As Paul often says, this was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

But when he wrote it, he wrote from what he knew as a result of that revelation. So so that Peter would write so similar to Ephesians is not a magical thing. At least I wouldn't think it is.

I think it's much more that he appreciated Paul's letters. And he he wrote his own epistle following very closely the kind of outline that Paul had done in Ephesians and a little bit of Colossians to Colossians. Is the other book we have to say something like this.

Colossians is a book that is very similar to Ephesians, as similar as they get. Both are shortish books. They're both prison epistles.

There are four epistles called the prison epistles. They're called that because it is

assumed they're all written during Paul's first imprisonment. Paul spent at least two years imprisoned in Rome, which is described at the end of the book of Acts.

The book of Acts closes with Paul arriving in Rome and remaining under house arrest for two years. He may have been under house arrest for more than that, but Luke didn't live or didn't write beyond that point because he had only been two years at the time he wrote the book of Acts. But during that time, which is between 60 and 62 AD, is when Paul is known to have written the prison epistles.

In fact, that's their true to that. Those epistles that are called prison epistles are Ephesians and Philippians and Colossians and Philemon. Philemon and Colossians were written to the same church.

Philemon was a man in the Church of Colossi. And so the Colossian epistle and the one to Philemon were written from the same imprisonment to the same church. Also, Philippians and Ephesians are prison epistles, which might explain why Paul goes off in longer sentences.

He's not riding on the road, catching time here and there to write a sentence or two. He's in prison for years. He's got time to let his mind spread out and just kind of let his consciousness flow as he writes.

So that might explain why his letter has so many long sentences as it does. But Colossians of the prison epistles is much closer to Ephesians than any other epistle is. It is said that there's about 78 verses in Ephesians that have their parallel in Colossians.

That's a pretty big chunk of these small books, 78 verses that the two books have in common, not necessarily verbatim, but the same information in them. It's very clear that when Paul wrote Colossians, he was obsessed with many of the same ideas as he was writing about in Ephesians. Now, there is a difference because Colossians is more personal.

He greets people in it. There is a heresy in Colossians writing against also the Colossian heresy, if you call it. And so he does get argumentative in Colossians.

He is specific about things that need to be corrected in their thinking. He's more personal. That's Colossians is different than Ephesians in that way.

But as far as subject matter, they track very, very similarly and have a lot of overlap, much more than any other two epistles of Paul. I believe maybe Galatians and Romans would come close to having as much overlap. Now, the difference between Colossians and Ephesians primarily is in the focus.

Colossians focuses on Jesus as the church's head. Ephesians focuses on the church as Christ's body. Now, the church is the body and Jesus is the head.

Colossians, the focus is on Christ, the head. Ephesians, the focus is on the church, the body of Christ. And so you've got there like complimentary to each other.

You've got the head and the body, both treated separately with in different epistles. But Colossians, when we study this and then when we study Colossians, you'll see how much there is in common. Now, I said that the church is Paul's main theme in Ephesians.

This is absolutely obvious when you begin to read the book. He's enamored with the concept of the of the universal church. When it comes to local churches, Paul sometimes can get aggravated because there are some problems and some misbehaving and some bad actors in the local churches.

But the church of Jesus Christ globally as a phenomenon that really only includes true followers of Christ, sincere disciples who have the spirit of Christ and are one in the spirit. That phenomenon, what it just captured Paul's heart. And frankly, I will say this.

I think it's hard to read Ephesians without it having the same impact. If you don't love or if you don't have a vision of the church of Jesus Christ, only Ephesians can impart that vision like no other book can. I would say this.

We'll take a break in a moment. Then we'll come back and do a survey of the book in the in the book of Ephesians. The church is represented under several different figures or metaphors.

It is, first of all, the family of God. We see that first of all, in Ephesians one five, where he says that God predestinated us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ. So we've been included by God into the family in Ephesians two and verse 19.

He says, Now, therefore, you're no longer strangers and for the fellow citizens of the face and members of the household of God, the family of God. You're in God's family now in Chapter three, verses 14 and 15. He says, For this reason, I bow my knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is made.

So the church is the family, the whole family is part of it in heaven now because they died in part of it. So on earth, it's one family in heaven and earth, and God is the father of it all. So the church is seen in that image of the family.

And so it's not surprising when he says to us in Chapter five, verse one, therefore, the followers of God as their children. God's our father. We should follow him like their children follow their father.

Now, the second image of the church in Ephesians is the body of Christ. In Chapter one, verses 22 and 23, it says that God has put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Now, the church is the body of Christ and it's the fullness of him.

We'll see more about that if we get a chance. I want to say this, that when we say the church is the body of Christ, that may be such a familiar image to us that no one thinks twice about it. But Paul, that's Paul's own image.

No other writer in the New Testament refers to the church as the body of Christ, except Paul. And he first mentions it in First Corinthians 12, when he's talking about the gifts of the spirit. We're all one body, and each one has different members, different contributions.

The gifts of the spirit are different because we have different functions and different members of a body. He's talking, of course, in that sense about the local church and the functions of the different parts of the body there in Corinth. But here he's talking about the global church as the one unique body of Christ.

And in chapter 2, verse 15, he says that God has abolished in Christ's flesh the enmity or the hostility between Jew and Gentile. That is the law of commandments contained in Ornstein's so as to create in himself one new man from the two. So God has taken the believing Jew, the believing Gentile, removed the barriers between them and made one new man, one new body.

The body of Christ from the two groups. Chapter 3, verse 6. He said that the mystery that was hidden from generations past is revealed to the prophets. Now, including Paul, is that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of the promise of Christ through the gospel.

So he mentions that we are heirs and of the same body heirs of the family. Again, the family of God were the heirs of the father. We are one body, also the body of Christ.

So to God, we're a family to Christ. We're a body. And also, as we shall see, we're also a bride.

But to the Holy Spirit, we are a temple. And this comes up to the temple in chapter 2, verses 21 through 22. Paul says in whom that is in Christ, the whole building being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God through the spirit with the temple of God.

Now, Peter, when he gets on this subject in first Peter, he speaks of us being living stones in built up into a spiritual temple. Paul says we are collectively the temple. We're collectively the family of God.

Collectively, we're the body of Christ. Peter talks about individually. Yes, collectively, we're a temple, but individually, we're like living stones being built up into a habitation of God.

And that's what he gets that idea, no doubt, from Paul here, who talks to us. We're

growing like a like a building under construction is growing as you put more stones on it. It's grown into this glorious temple in the Lord.

We also find, of course, that the temple of the church is the body of the bride of Christ. In chapter five, verses 22 through 23, Paul's instructions to wives and husbands are based on this assumption. Wives are told to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ.

Husbands are told to love their husbands as Christ loves the church. And he says at the end here in verse 30, says, for we are members of his body of his flesh and his bones. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. So he's saying the church is like a married couple with Christ. Christ, the husband, us, the wife and so forth, the bride of Christ.

This also is a familiar phrase for us. It's not common in the Bible. The church is seen as a bride in Revelation chapter 21.

And Paul does say in 2 Corinthians 11 that he has betrothed the church to Christ as a chaste virgin to be married to him. But the idea actually goes back to John the Baptist in the third chapter of John. When John's disciples said, you know, Jesus baptizing more people than you are.

John said, well, it's the bridegroom who gets the bride, not the matchmaker. The bridegroom's friend is the matchmaker. He introduces the bride in the bridegroom.

That's what John was. He's the matchmaker. He says, now the people are the bride.

Jesus is the bridegroom. So, of course, I expect the bride to go to the bridegroom, not to me. And Jesus picking up on John's metaphor there in Matthew 9, when some of John's disciples come to you, how can you know fast? Your disciples don't fast like we do.

Jesus said, well, shall the children of the bride chamber mourn while the bridegroom is with them? He's the disciple of John to whom he said that Jesus was the bridegroom. And he picks up on that. But there is the marriage feast parable that Jesus teaches in Matthew 22, verses one through something, ten or so.

There are these different places. But Paul tells us that when God made marriage and he said for this cause, a man should leave his father, mother, and please his wife, the two should be one flesh. So that's intended mysteriously to refer to Christ in the church.

God designed marriage as a picture of Christ in the church. And so it's based on that, that he gives the instructions he does to the wives about submitting to their husbands

and to the husbands to love their wives like Christ and gave himself for it. The husband is supposed to sacrifice himself for his wife because that's what Christ did for his church.

The wife is supposed to submit to him as head because that's what the church does. And Christ is the head. He's the husband.

Then one other image of them, we'll take a break, is that the church is the army of God. This is not the only place in Paul's writings where a metaphor of military activity is. I mean, Paul talks about fighting the good fight.

And, you know, he tells Timothy in Second Timothy to endure hardship is a good soldier. Jesus Christ in First Thessalonians, Chapter five, he talks about having the arm, having the breastplate of faith and hope and the helmet of the hope of salvation. And in Ephesians, though, he develops this idea like nowhere else.

I mean, he spends a lengthy portion of the last chapter, Chapter six, verses 11 through 17, breaking down this idea of armor and warfare and saying, you know, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel, the shield of the faith, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God and so forth, the belt of truth. So he actually kind of develops this idea of being the army, being soldiers. So the church, which is Paul's whole theme, is represented by these different images that are supposed to help us understand more about what it means to be part of the church.

We're part of God's family. He's our father. We're his children.

We're part of a body. Christ is our head. We're members of his body.

We're part of the temple, the Holy Spirit. He dwells in us. We're supposed to be holy, like a temple, giving him a holy place to dwell.

We're like a bride to Christ. We are the bride of Christ. And we're the army of God.

We're carrying out the mission of Christ. So this is how Ephesians is going to talk about the church from the beginning to the end. Now, when we come back in about 10 minutes, I want to do a survey of the book.

And there are some main themes I would have included in the introduction, but I think since we've gone this long, they actually belong to the survey anyway. I will say much more, for example, about Chapter 1 and that long sentence than probably any other comparable part of the book. Why don't we take a break?