

is it so impersonal? Who are the "captives" of Ephesians 4:8 (Ps. 68:18)? Where is the letter to the Laodiceans? What was the original relationship between Ephesians and Colossians? Paul usually wrote to correct misunderstandings of doctrine or practice; what misunderstanding(s) was he addressing in Ephesians?

Archaeology

Ephesus was the most important city in Roman Asia (western Turkey). No longer inhabited, it still boasts perhaps the most spectacular ruins in Asia Minor. Its theatre held more than 25,000, and temples to various emperors (Claudius, Hadrian, Severus) attest to the importance of the emperor cult in Ephesus. The official, called the town clerk in Acts 19:35, who quieted the riot against Paul and his followers was responsible directly to the Romans for breaches of the peace--including illegal assemblies.

The most famous feature of ancient Ephesus was, of course, the great temple of Diana (Artemis in Greek), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Four times the size of Athens' Parthenon, it contained an image "fallen from heaven", perhaps a meteorite. It was decorated with sculptures and paintings by the greatest artists of the Greek world. It was not merely an artistic center, however. It contributed heavily to the coffers of the Ephesus. Because of its sanctity throughout Asia it served as a holding bank for the entire province. It was also the goal of thousands of pilgrims from throughout the Roman world, as is attested by coins from across the empire which bear its image. Only its foundations remain today, obscured in a marsh.

Colossae, 100 miles east of Ephesus, was a city in decline in the first century. Early in its history it had been a city of some importance because of its position on a major east-west highway. Its two sister cities, however, Hierapolis and Laodicea, grew in importance so that in Paul's time, Colossae was long past its prime. Its chief product was colossinus, a type of wool that may have been purple in color. Angel worship was prominent in Colossae, Michael was the city's patron and had once, so it was said, saved the city when it was threatened by a flood. Only a few remains have been discovered at Colossae, the ruined foundations of a theatre, a few temple ruins, some houses.

Keys:

Ephesians 1:8 outlines the major themes of the book--the hope to which believers are called and the inheritance of the saints.