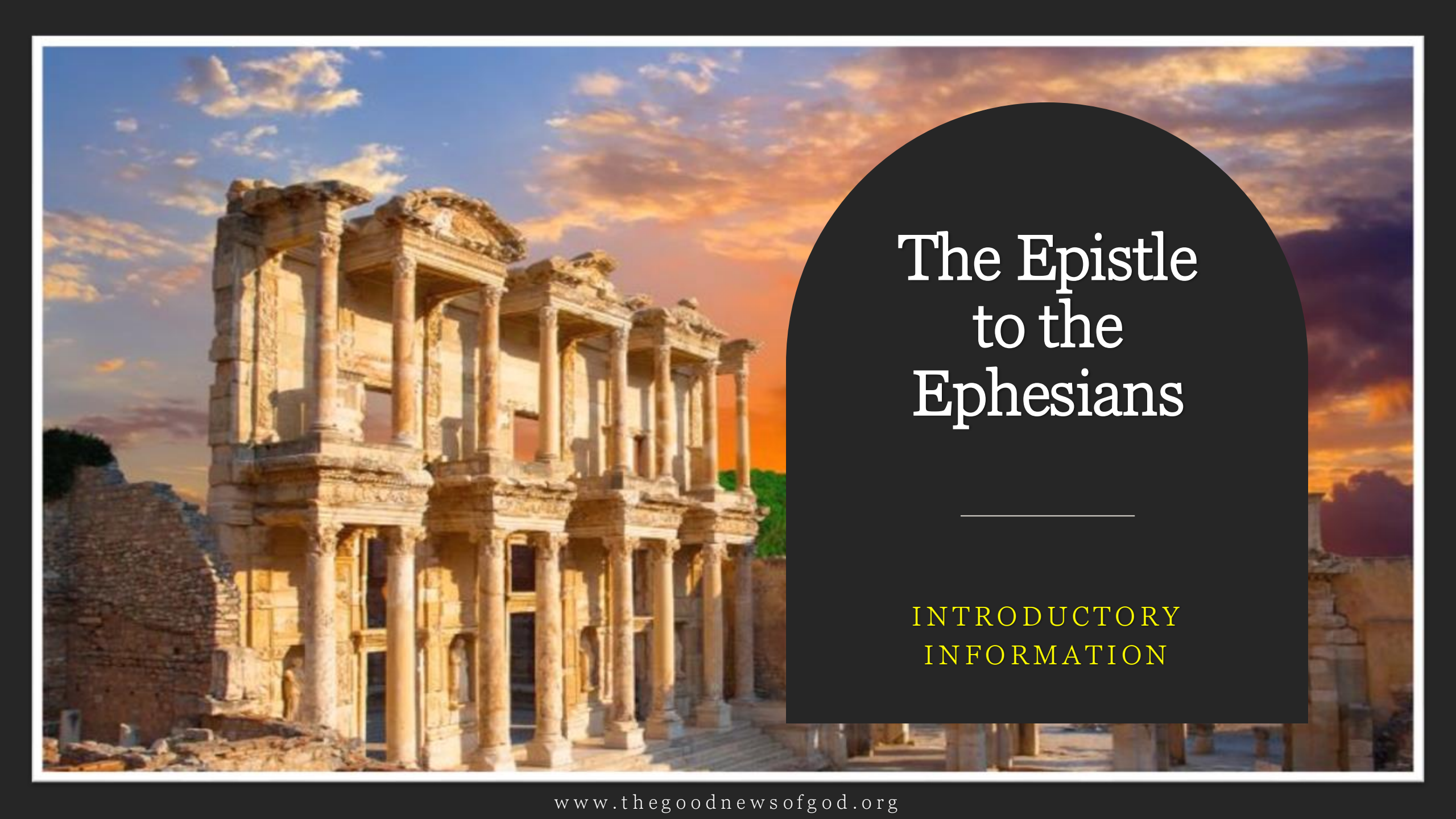




The Epistle to the Ephesians

INTRODUCTORY
INFORMATION

Background

I. PAUL WROTE THE LETTER TO EPHESUS WHILE IMPRISONED (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20).

- It is believed that Paul wrote the letter while imprisoned in Rome around 62 AD.
 - This dates the letter probably 23-32 years after the death of Christ and about the same time period as Philemon and Colossians were written.
- Paul was certainly no stranger to being arrested and imprisoned.
 - He was arrested in Jerusalem (**Acts 21**).
 - He was imprisoned in Caesarea for about two years (**Acts 23; 24:27**).
 - He was imprisoned in Rome (**Acts 28**).
 - This appears to be the occasion in which Paul penned the letter to the Ephesians.
- Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were each carried by Tychicus and/or Onesimus (**Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9; Phile. 10-12**).

Background

II. EPHESUS WAS A KEY LOCATION IN PAUL'S WORK (Acts 18-20).

- Paul visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-19).
 - Paul spent time teaching in the synagogue (Acts 18:19).
 - Priscilla and Aquila stayed there after Paul returned to Antioch (Acts 18:19-21).
 - Apollos came later and also taught in the synagogue; Priscilla and Aquila helped Apollos mature in his teaching (Acts 18:24-26).
 - Paul spent three years in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19-20).
 - Paul faced opposition (Acts 19:8-9, 23-41; 20:19, 22, 29-31), yet the gospel prevailed (Acts 19:20).
 - Paul and the church in Ephesus (for sure the elders) had a very close relationship (Acts 20:36-37).

III. THE IMPERSONAL NATURE OF THE LETTER HAS CAUSED DOUBT.

- Paul labored in Ephesus for over two years (Acts 19:10), but there are no personal greetings.
- The impersonal nature of this letter has caused scholars to doubt if Paul actually wrote Ephesians, as well as contributed to the theory that this letter was not intended for one specific church but numerous churches across Asia Minor, as was the case with Revelation (Rev. 1:4).

Background

III. THE IMPERSONAL NATURE OF THE LETTER HAS CAUSED DOUBT (cont).

- Although Ephesians is oddly impersonal, I still believe the letter was written by Paul and was specifically intended for the church in Ephesus because:
 - The book of Ephesians has the same “*grace and peace to you*” greeting as all of Paul’s letters (**Eph. 1:2**).
 - If the Bible really is the inerrant word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16**), then we can trust **Eph. 1:1** and **3:1**.
 - Although it is true that early manuscripts omit the words “*in Ephesus*” in **Eph. 1:1**, no location besides Ephesus is recorded in any surviving text or manuscript. Plus, some manuscripts omit the words “*in Rome*” at **Rom. 1:7** and **1:15**, yet we do not doubt that the letter was addressed to the church in Rome.
 - Ephesians appears to be a further development of the material in Colossians, which Paul also wrote.
 - Paul may have simply chosen to reserve the more personal statements/directives to be revealed at another time.
 - Ephesus had elders (**Acts 20:28-30**); they should have been addressing specific problems within the congregation before Paul needed to step in. However, 1 Timothy was also sent to Ephesus (**1 Tim. 1:3**). Things become very personal and directly applicable to the specific church at Ephesus when you consider the primary focus of 1 Timothy is for certain ones to be charged “*not to teach different doctrines*” (**1 Tim. 1:3; 4-7, 18-20; 4:1-16; 6:3-10, 17-21**).

Background

IV. SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF THE LETTER.

The letter is essentially divided into two sections that come together to paint one perfect picture by:

- Encouraging us to reflect upon our blessings in Christ (**Eph. 1-3**) . . .
 - Spiritual blessings (**Eph. 1:3-14**).
 - Spiritual possession (**Eph. 2:1-22**).
 - The mystery revealed (**Eph. 3:1-13**).
 - Paul's prayer for the church (**Eph. 3:14-21**).
- . . . and exhorting to recognize our responsibilities in Christ (**Eph. 4-6**).
 - Walk in unity (**Eph. 4:1-16**).
 - Walk in purity (**Eph. 4:17-5:21**).
 - Walk in harmony (**Eph. 5:22-6:9**).
 - Walk in the armor of God (**Eph. 6:10-17**).