

St. Paul's Letter to the Church at Ephesus

*“I believe in the Holy Christian
Church, the communion of saints”*



Prolegomena

“Things said beforehand”

✦ *Author*

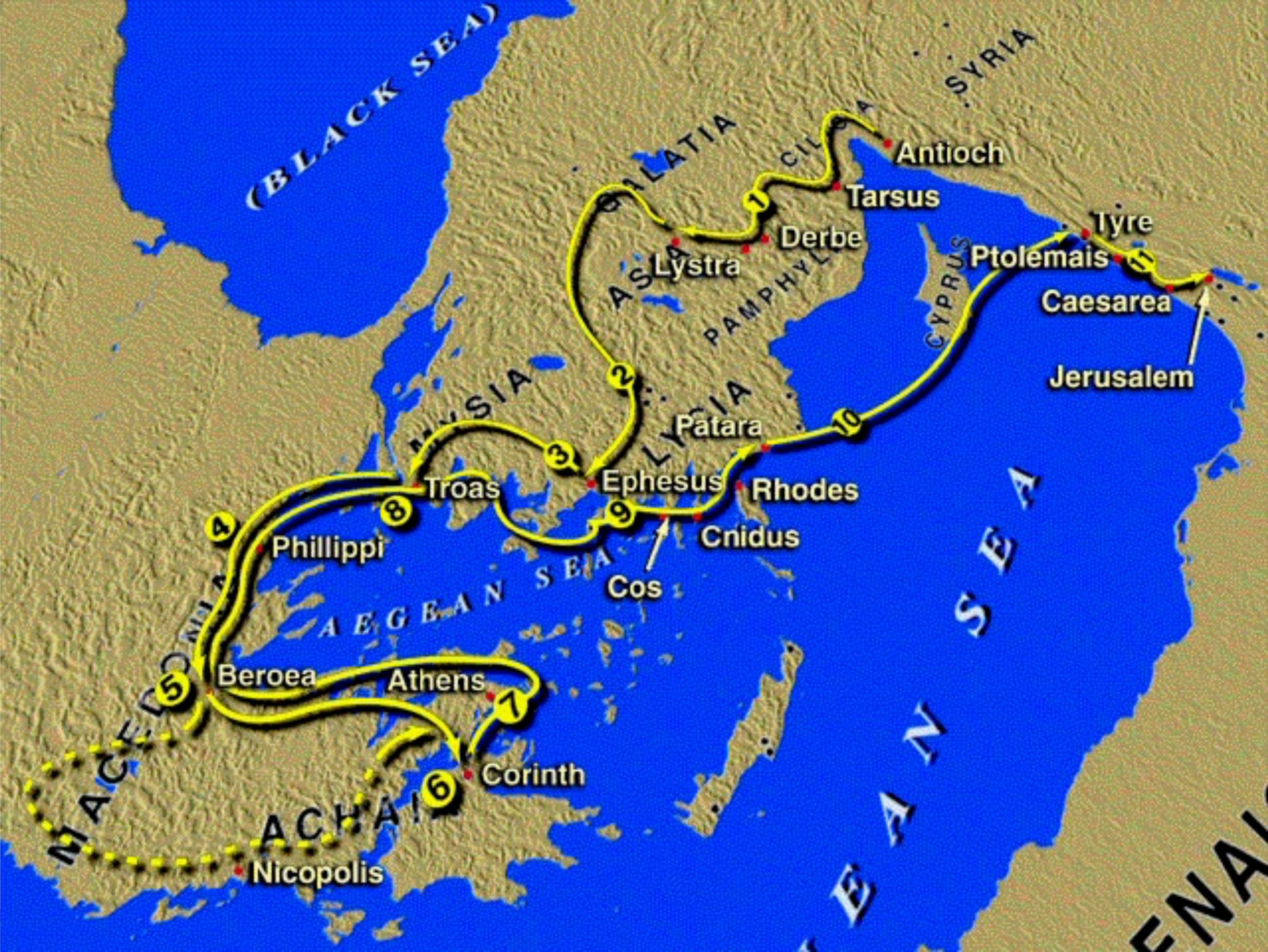
✦ *Apostle Paul recognized both by early church and even Gnostics as author*

✦ *Very common Pauline opening (1 & 2 Cor., Gal., Col.)*

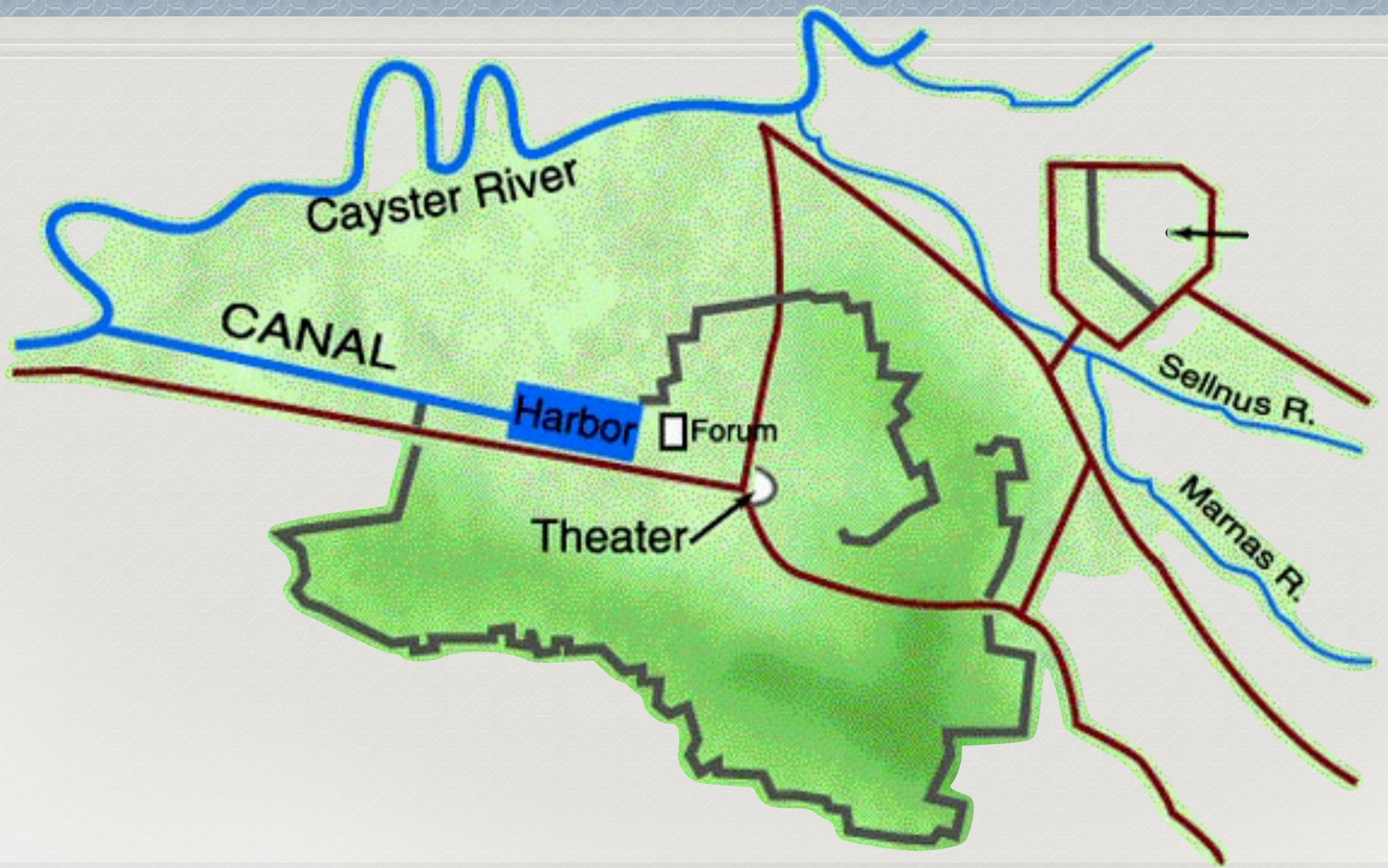
✦ *Extensive use already by AD 90*

Addressees

- ✿ *“To the saints who are in Ephesus”*
- ✿ *Cf. Rom. 1:7, 2 Cor. 1:1, Phil. 1:1*







- ◆ *Founded in 10th century BC by Attic and Ionian Greek Colonists*
- ◆ *Western Asia Minor (modern day Turkey)*
- ◆ *Major port city*
- ◆ *Very metropolitan*
- ◆ *Capital city*

- ◆ *Home to Library of Celsus and a 24,000-seat theater*
- ◆ *One of the seven churches to receive a letter from Christ as recorded in Revelation (Rev. 2:1-7)*
- ◆ *Aquila, Priscilla and Apollos worked to spread the Gospel (Acts 18)*
- ◆ *Destroyed by Goths in AD 263*

Artemis

- ✦ *Devoted to the goddess Artemis*
- ✦ *Temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the World*
- ✦ *Artemis was to protect and feed the people of Ephesus*
- ✦ *Acts 19*



Place and Time of Writing

- ✦ *During a time of Paul's imprisonment (ὁ δέσμιος = prisoner; cf Col 4:18; Philem. 1, 9, 10, 13)*
 - ✦ *Most likely during time in Rome*
 - ✦ *Paul had greater freedom than while in Caesarea*
 - ✦ *Caesarea was reserved for the apostle to the circumcised (Gal. 2:7-9)*
- ✦ *Likely around AD 62*

Occasion/Purpose/Content

- ✿ *No specific circumstance*
- ✿ *Una Sancta is the overarching theme*
- ✿ *Ephesian congregation is largest and most well-catechized in Asia Minor and was located in the midst of paganism*
- ✿ *Paul was urging the Ephesians to be mindful of her high calling as part of the Church of Christ in the world*

Outline of Epistle

- ✿ *One Common Salvation (1-3)*
 - ✿ *Greeting (1:1-2)*
 - ✿ *Doxology and thanksgiving (1:3-22)*
 - ✿ *Bound together in Christ (2:1-3:13)*
 - ✿ *Paul's prayer for the Ephesians/Body of Christ and praise of God (3:14-21)*

✦ *The Common Life of the Body of Christ (4-6)*

✦ *One calling, various gifts (4:1-16)*

✦ *A new life in faith - the life of love (4:17-6:9)*

✦ *Armed for battle (6:10-20)*

✦ *Greetings from separated family (6:21-24)*

One Common Salvation (1-3)

- ✦ *The God-willed apostleship of St. Paul*
- ✦ *“To the saints”*
- ✦ *Grace and peace*

- ✦ *The blessings of God in Christ (Barakah)*
- ✦ *Election/predestination (FC Ep. XI: 5, 10-11; FC SD: 33, 38, 65-66, 69-72)*
- ✦ *Only spoken of regarding salvation*
- ✦ *Always and only in Christ*
- ✦ *We would be sons*

- ✿ *We have redemption through Jesus' blood*
- ✿ *He has made known to us the mystery of His will*
- ✿ *All things in heaven and on earth are united in Christ.*
- ✿ *We have obtained an inheritance*
- ✿ *We receive the promised Holy Spirit*

- ✿ *Thanksgiving and prayer for the Ephesians*
(Hodayah prayer)
- ✿ *Faith and love which are established in*
Christ
- ✿ *“Eyes of your hearts enlightened”*

- ✦ *Petitions rooted in the power of God
which raised Christ from the dead*
- ✦ *Fulfillment of the enthronement psalms
(8 & 110)*

2 ¹And *you*—when you were dead in your trespasses and sins
²in which you once walked according to the age of this world,
according to the ruler of the authority of the air,
the spirit of the one now working in the sons of disobedience,
³among whom also *we* all once conducted ourselves in the passions of our flesh,
doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts,
and we were by nature children of wrath like the rest—
⁴but *God*, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved
us,
⁵even *us*, when we were dead in [our] trespasses,
[God] made alive together with Christ
—by grace you have been saved!—
⁶and he raised [us] together and seated [us] together in the heavenly
places in Christ Jesus,
⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the surpassing richness
of his grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.
⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith;
and this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God,
⁹not from works, lest anyone should boast.
¹⁰For we are what he has made, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God
prepared beforehand, that in them we should walk.

- ✦ *Benefits flow from the head to the body*
- ✦ *Ephesians and Colossians - the whole body's relationship to Christ*
- ✦ *Corinthians - the relationship of the parts of the body to one another*

✦ *The Lord's Supper is the marriage feast wherein the Bride gives Himself, His life, to His Bride*

✦ ***“This is the place where Christ and His bride become one flesh, as His Flesh enters and enlivens our flesh, transforming us from what we were into what He is.”*** (Winger, Ephesians, 275)

- ✿ *Chapter 2 - move from objective justification to subjective justification*
- ✿ *What we were -> What God has now made us*
- ✿ *Death -> Life*
- ✿ *Trespases and sins -> Good works from God*

Translation

² ¹¹Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by what is called “Circumcision” (made in the flesh by hands),

¹²that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and godless in the world.

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who at one time were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has destroyed the dividing wall of partition, the hostility, in his flesh,

¹⁵by nullifying the Law of commandments in decrees, that in him he might create the two into one new man, making peace,

¹⁶and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, by killing the hostility in him.

¹⁷And when he came he preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;

¹⁸for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹So, then, you are no longer strangers and sojourners,

but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household,

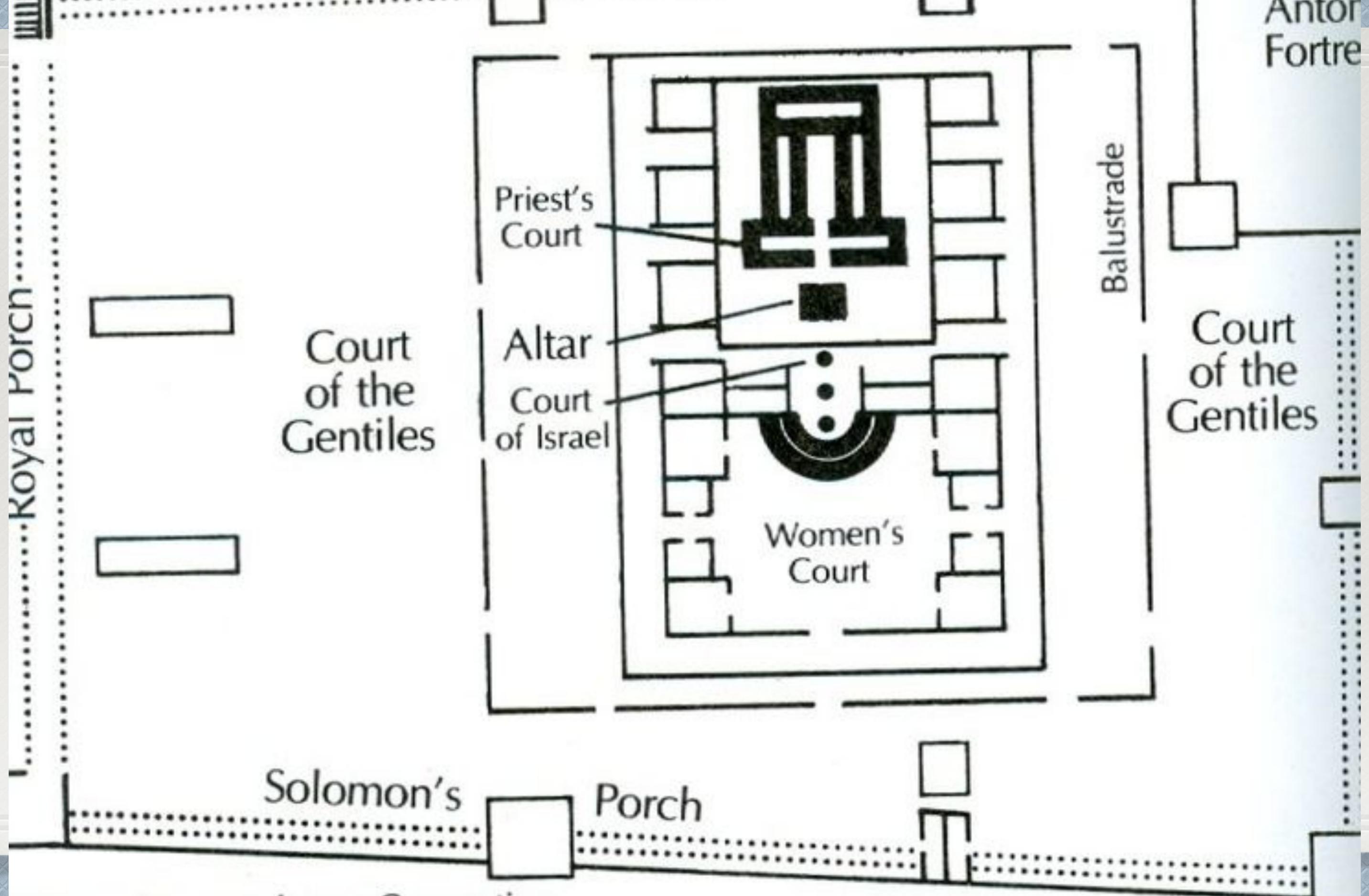
²⁰having been built up upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself,

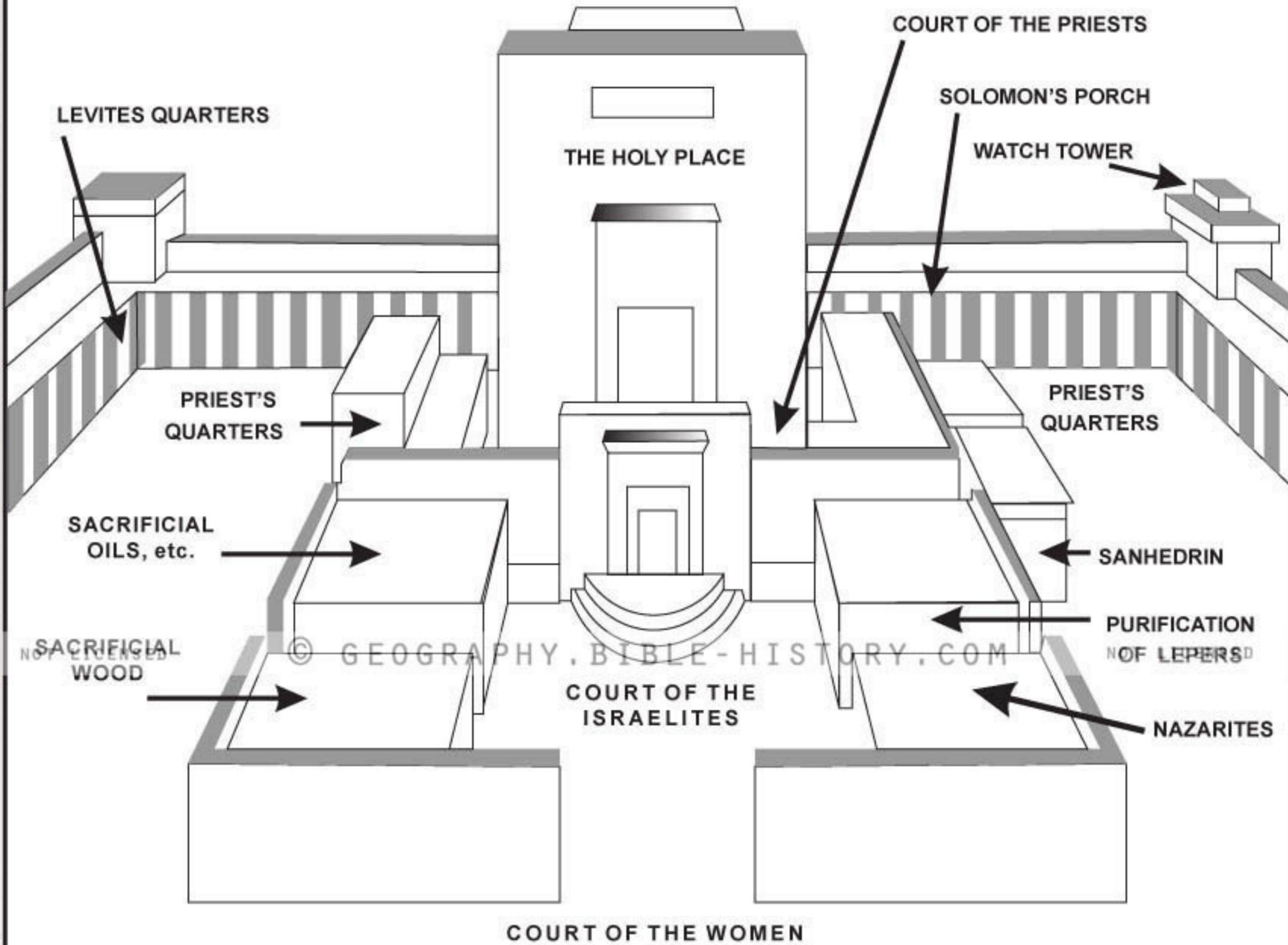
²¹in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple

in the Lord,

²²in whom also you are built up together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.



COURT OF GENTILES (OUTSIDE)



COURT OF THE WOMEN

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

✦ *“Dividing/middle wall*

✦ *The separation of Jews from Gentiles rather than God from man*

✦ *Allusion to the Soreg which was not original to God’s design of the temple*

✦ *“Let no foreigner enter within the screen and enclosure surrounding the sanctuary. Whosoever is taken so doing will be the cause that death overtaketh him.” (Inscription hung on entry point of Soreg)*

✦ 4¹ *“Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake 4² (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, 4³ hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.*

1 Kings 8:41-43

- ✿ *Acts 21:29 - Paul is assumed to have brought Trophimus the Ephesian past the Soreg.*
- ✿ *Paul is addressing the reality that the Gentiles did not have a hope for salvation because they did not have the preaching of the Messiah and the promise of atonement.*
- ✿ *The Law of Israel, given by God, made Israel distinct from all other nations.*

✿ *3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” 4 For thus says the Lord: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5 I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6 “And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” 8 The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”*

Isaiah 56:3-8

- ✦ *In 3:1, Paul begins with a thought that he “interrupts” and completes in 3:14.*
- ✦ *Not a mistake or loss in the train of thought*
- ✦ *2 possible reasons: 1) This was a planned move to teach on the apostolic office and the Office of the Holy Ministry and/or 2) as Paul was about to pray and offer a doxology, in his flexibility of thought he decided to take the opportunity to provide the teaching.*
- ✦ *In either case, this was done at the carrying along of the Holy Spirit.*

- ✿ *3:1-12 is the appointed Epistle for Epiphany*
- ✿ *“this reason” = the revelation of the mystery of the inclusion of the Gentiles and, specifically, the Ephesian Christians, in God’s plan of salvation in Christ from eternity (chapter 2)*

- ✿ *Paul's imprisonment was a direct consequence of Paul's preaching of the Gospel in Ephesus (Acts 19) but he recognized that his imprisonment was ultimately a continuation of Christ's own suffering (suffering which he himself had once caused - Acts 8 and 9)*
- ✿ *Fulfillment of Jesus' words to Paul "Saul, Saul. Why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4) and concerning Paul "For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My Name." (Acts 9:16)*
- ✿ *Paul's suffering was a living manifestation of Christ and thus a confirmation of the validity rather than the falsity of Paul's call and office*
- ✿ *Paul comforts the Ephesians who may have been scandalized by his imprisonment*

- ✦ *Paul is a prisoner “of Christ” in that he is constrained by Christ to preach what he preaches, and a prisoner “on account of” Christ in that it is Christ’s will that he be imprisoned in Rome that God may continue the preaching of the Gospel and give strength and encouragement to others who were and would suffer for Christ’s Name.*

- ✦ *Paul appears to be making use of a rhetorical device known as “internal proofs”*
- ✦ *Pathos: capturing the goodwill of the audience*
- ✦ *Logos: the logical argument*
- ✦ *Ethos: the speaker’s character**

- ✿ *Both the divine nature of Paul's call (the unique immediate [called and taught directly by Jesus] to be an apostle and the content of what he preaches are means by which Paul assures the Ephesians of the truth of his preaching.*
- ✿ *Pattern of chapters 1-3: revelation - teaching - prayer - doxology*
- ✿ *When the mystery of our salvation is preached, the response of faith is to praise God and share the good news with others because God intends them to be beneficiaries as well. God brings this about through our vocations.*

- ✿ *“Mystery of Christ”: Christ Jesus is both the mystery and the same time the revelation of the mystery. The Gentiles are included in the salvation which God has prepared in Christ, which Christ revealed to the apostles and prophets and then sent them to proclaim in His Name, by His authority.*
- ✿ *Paul acknowledges that part of the mystery is that God would entrust the proclamation of salvation in Christ to a man who once hated Christ, approved the martyring of St. Stephen, and hunted down Christians to persecute.*

- ✿ *Also part of the mystery, the plan of salvation in Christ, is that the Church would be the vehicle through which Christ continues His work of bringing salvation to the world which by necessity means that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed to the true enemies of God as a testament against them (6:12)*
- ✿ *In 14, Paul fills out what he began in 1, namely falling in humility before God for this whole unimaginable and wonderful plan of salvation which God has carried out and brought to its fulness at that time.*

- ✦ *The mighty works of God are the basis and content of our prayers and praise. When we consider the true nature of these things, what attitude and posture can we take but to “bend the knee”?*
- ✦ *Kneeling and standing are both well-attested postures of prayer in Christendom and also in the Old Testament.*
- ✦ *Council of Nicea: “Forasmuch as there are certain person who kneel on the Lord’s Day and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, to the intent hat all things may be uniformly observed everywhere, it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing.”*
- ✦ *Standing is somewhat understood to be a joyous and confident posture where kneeling is a posture of repentance and humility (at confession and before the altar at Holy Communion).*

✦ *God as the Father is the source and definition of all fathers and all families. All fathers and families are to be pure reflections of how He is Father and how He is to His family. For a man to enter holy marriage is to say “I will be head to this woman as Christ is head of the Church and I will be father to the children of our union as God is Father to us, His dear children.” Hence, marriage is not to be entered into lightly or inadvisedly.*

✦ *The same Spirit that binds us to the Father, binds us to each other.*

- ✿ *Paul, with true pastoral care, prays that the Ephesian Christians would truly grasp the great magnitude of what God has done for them in Christ and that, being rooted and grounded in Christ's love for us, may be filled with the fullness of all of God's blessings which are had in Christ, through faith, by the gift of the Holy Spirit who gives these blessings through the Word preached and administer in the sacraments.*
- ✿ *All the saints attain to one knowledge and one salvation in the one Christ.*
- ✿ *This prayer is very Trinitarian - The Father strengthening us with power through the Holy Spirit, by whom Christ dwells in us and is our life.*

- ✿ *20-21 are a doxology giving glory to God by confessing and praising Him for what He has done and proclaimed.*
- ✿ *The power at work within us (see vs. 16) is the Gospel of salvation by which we have been set free from the hands of our enemies that we might serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, free from the fear of our enemies because they have been conquered by the Blood of Christ which covers us in His righteousness. Thus it is Christ, not some inner power of our own that we are to harness, that does far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.*
- ✿ *All glory belongs alone to God for He alone creates, sustains, and redeems us by His grace.*

✦ *The “Therefore” of 4:1 roots what follows in the new life that we have been given in Christ, having been called out of our former life of sin and death. We have been united to the Baptized by the common salvation that we have in Christ. Chapter 4 is an encouragement to guard that unity by living as those united by a common salvation in a common Lord.*

✦ *As Paul is bound to and for Christ, we are bound to one another.*

✦ *“To walk” = faith and life*

- ✦ *Of absolute necessity to maintaining our Christian unity is humility.*
- ✦ *Humility before God*
- ✦ *Humility before one another*
- ✦ *As those with whom our Lord has patiently born, we are to patiently bear with the weaknesses and failing of one another. We do not turn from one another's weaknesses because Christ has turned away from ours. We expect (not encourage) to see sins of life in the body of Christ because we know that we all are still wrestling against the sinful flesh.*

✦ *The structure of 4:4-6 suggest that Paul may have either quoted or paraphrased a hymn or portion of the liturgy that the Ephesians would have been familiar with. He is both pulling out the fullness of that text as well as allowing that familiar text to further the teaching. This is why the hymns and liturgy of the church are so carefully guarded and treasured. They teach the truth. Many of the heretics of old as well as false teachers today use music to proliferate their lies. We have to listen carefully to all the words before we go drinking them in or feeding them to our children. Luther understood the power of music and sought to harness it to teach the truth.*

- ✦ *Chapter 4 very well could be considered the beating heart of the epistle, especially 4:4-6. Paul has been building up to this point and everything that follows supports it - one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.*

- ✦ *As the unity of the body is in view rather than the individual members, verse 7 is most likely meant to convey that everyone has been the same/common grace so that no one can claim superiority over another.*

- ✦ *The ascension of Jesus, God still in human flesh, unleashed a floodgate of blessings upon us. He who had descended to the earth in His incarnation that He might unite God and man in Himself, has ascended far above all the heavens, to rule over all things.*
- ✦ *The passage quoted from Psalm 68 actually reads “He led captivity captive.” By His death and resurrection, He is now Lord over our captivity. We belong to Him rather than to sin, death, and the devil.*
- ✦ *Having ascended He has given the gift of the preaching ministry so that His victory might be proclaimed and given to men.*

- ✦ *The spoils of Christ's victory include the message of reconciliation which Christ causes to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth by instituting the preaching offices. That one common work in those various offices proceeds from the one Holy Spirit.*
- ✦ *This negates the modern notion that pastors are simply officers which the Church has provided for herself. They, the men, not simply the aptitudes, are gifts from God. (Winger, 449-450)*

- ✦ *The first work of the gifts which Christ gives for the unity of the Church in the one faith is the full equipping of the saints so that they may be complete in Christ, ultimately the Word and the Sacraments.*
 - ✦ *The Church is an armory for Christians. (Cf. 6:10-17)*
- ✦ *The second work of the ministers is the work of the ministry - absolving, preaching, administering the sacraments, teaching, visiting the sick and shut-in, admonishing the saints to holy living.*
- ✦ *v.4 is best translated as “for bringing the saints to completion, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”*
 - ✦ *diakonias - the work of the diakanos who is one who has been given the authority of another to carry out specific tasks (public service)*

- ✦ *“Building up the body of Christ” = continuing incorporating those outside into the body*
- ✦ *New stones*
- ✦ *Moving from weak to strong stones*

- ✿ *The surpassing work of the ministry is to work toward attaining the the perfect unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, not making everyone comfortable with the disunity of the faith.*
- ✿ *Not perfectly accomplished until eternity*
- ✿ *Unitas - unity of the baptized as a reality established by God*
- ✿ *Concordia - harmony of confession toward which we strive*

- ✦ *“The knowledge of the Son of God” = given by the Word of God as it is preached and taught by the diakanos*
- ✦ *Maturing*
- ✦ *Combatting false teaching*
- ✦ *Not simply knowledge of facts, but firmness of confession*
 - ✦ ***My Lord and my God for me***

- ✦ *The complete/perfect man = a man in whom God finds no fault because his trust is in Christ alone.*
- ✦ *Rightly ordered toward God and neighbor*
- ✦ ***Not** children in the things of Christ*

- ✿ *Measure of maturity of the fullness of Christ*
- ✿ *Manhood in its purest form as God created and ordered it*
- ✿ *We are to strive to pattern our lives after Christ, not dismiss that as “impossible” (What did Jesus perfect faith in His Father lead Him to do?)*

- ✿ *We are not to be infants in regard to false teaching*
- ✿ *Tossing seas - the wicked (Is. 57:20; Noah's enemy; chaos; the domain of the devil)*
- ✿ *The unity of the faith never changes or develops*
- ✿ *Christians are to be equipped with the Word against trickery and deceit*
- ✿ *The truth is plainly spoken while falsehood uses trickery and manipulation of God's Word*

- ✦ *Growing into Christ is accomplished only by the Word and the Holy Spirit through the ministry (AC V)*
- ✦ *The Church and the Christian grow into Christ, not away from Him*
- ✦ *Sunarmologeo - joined together so as to form a coherent entity*
- ✦ *Sumbibadzo - to draw or knit together*
- ✦ *Christ is both the source and the goal of the body's growth*