

Study 5: Introduction to 1st Timothy

Introduction

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Body of the Study

Paul's Fourth Journey

Place, date, and occasion of the letter

Paul's association with Timothy

The Ephesian church

The culture of Ephesus

The style of the letter

Outline of the letter

Homework and preparation for next week:

Read the whole book in a single sitting, and a few days later read chapter 1 again.

Read the notes as a review of the study

Notes for study 5: Introduction to 1st Timothy

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Paul's Fourth Journey

[For a longer discussion on this, refer to the introduction to Titus, and the Series on the Life of Paul]. We cannot fit the Paul's travels described in the pastoral epistles into the Acts narrative. It is evident that they fit into another journey that Paul had made (the 4th journey) after the close of his Roman imprisonment. We do not know for certain the places that Paul went to, or the order that he visited them.

Conybeare & Howson¹ suggest that upon leaving Rome Paul went to Macedonia, and then to Ephesus. Whilst there he visited Colossae and Laodoea. After that he went to Spain by ship to avoid the political upheavals of Rome, where he stayed for two years. From Spain he returned to Ephesus again where his predictions of Acts 20 of apostasy were coming to fruition. After leaving Ephesus, he went to Corinth, and he then spent the winter at Nicopolos, where he was arrested and sent to Rome for execution around AD 66 or 67.

Place, date, and occasion of the letter

Because we don't know exactly where Paul went, and when he went there, it is impossible to pin down a time and place for the letter. The strong similarities between Titus and 1st Timothy suggest that they were both written at (or around) the same time, with 1st Timothy written first. Consequently, Corinth is the most likely place of writing the epistles to Titus and 1st Timothy.

Whilst both letters discuss the qualifications of elders, there are subtle differences in the circumstances. Titus was instructed to appoint elders (Tit 1:5) whilst Timothy was instructed to bring the disorderly elders at Ephesus into order (1 Tim 1:3).

This makes the time of writing at around 64 or 65 AD before the winter in Nicopolos, after which Paul was taken to Rome, imprisoned, and executed.

Paul is quite explicit in the purpose of the letter: "...*Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth...*" (2:3:14-15 NIV).

So, the occasion of the letter is Paul writing to Timothy to set the disorderly amongst the congregation in order. These had apparently arisen from amongst the elders, just as he had predicted (Acts 20:30), and he names Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:1:20). Presumably Hymenaeus was the ringleader, as he is named first here, and again in 2:2:17.

Paul's association with Timothy

Timothy first appears in scripture in Acts 16:1. Paul is on the second journey, and he takes Timothy and circumcises him. However, Timothy is already a disciple at this time. Paul regards him as *his own son in the faith* so it is most likely that Paul actually converted him on the first journey, when Paul was stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:19-21) around 47 AD. Timothy was born to a Greek father, and a Jewish mother and grandmother who had taught him the scriptures from an

¹ Conybeare, WJ & Howson, JS "The Life and Epistles of St Paul" Eerdmans, Grand Rapids Mi. ISBN 0-8028-8086-X p.745

early age. When Paul writes the first letter to Timothy around 64 or 65 AD, he has had nearly a 20-year association with him.

Paul took Timothy with him on the second journey, and used him as a courier between Athens / Corinth and Thessalonica with the Thessalonian letters. We don't know what happened to Timothy after this (whether he went back to Antioch with Paul, or whether he remained in Macedonia / Achaia), but he appears again on the third journey, during Paul's (nearly) three-year stay in Ephesus when he sends him to Corinth after the first letter (1 Cor 14:17; 16:10-11). He was also with Paul in Macedonia (Philippi) when he wrote the 2nd Corinthian letter. On the return to Jerusalem with the gift for the Jewish brethren, Timothy accompanies Paul along with many others (Acts 20:4), and is later found with Paul in Rome during the first Roman imprisonment (Php 1:1; Col 1:1; Phm 1:1), where Paul was intending to use him as his emissary (Php 2:19-22).

The Ephesian church

Whilst we know quite a lot of the detail of what was happening in the Corinthian church from what we can read in the Corinthian letters, there is no other church in the New Testament that we can observe over as long a period of time as the Ephesian church.

It was probably started when Paul visited on the close of the second journey (53 AD) as he was returning to Antioch & Jerusalem (Acts 18:19-21). He left Priscilla and Aquilla behind, and shortly after Apollos came by (Acts 18:24). Unlike most other places Paul visited, he received a very positive reaction in Ephesus, and the Jews wanted him to stay longer.

On the third journey (54 AD - about 6 months later) Paul comes to Ephesus and then spends around 2 ½ years there (the longest he stayed anywhere). His ministry was so successful, that the whole city was in uproar because they well understood that christianity would result in the demise of the Temple of Diana (one of the seven wonders of the Ancient world). With this would come the loss of their trades as silversmiths making trinkets to celebrate the god Diana (also called Artemas) (Acts 19:24-27).

On the return to Jerusalem in early AD 57, Paul comes by Ephesus again, and calls for the elders of the church. He tells them that apostasy is going to come, and that the very leaders of the church (the elders), are going to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:30).

During the first Roman imprisonment (62 AD), Paul writes the Ephesian letter as a call to faithfulness. [Chapter 1 deals with what we've got in Christ; Chapter 2 deals with looking at where we've come from – why would we want to go anywhere else; Chapter 3 deals with the church as God's eternal plan – not an accident; Chapters 4 & 5 are a call to Godly living; and Chapter 6 is a call to fight the spiritual warfare]. The apostasy was coming, and the letter was written to encourage the brethren to remain faithful.

The letters to Timothy were written late in Paul's fourth missionary journey (65 AD) and during the second Roman imprisonment (66 AD). Paul instructs Timothy to get the disorderly church into order.

John addresses the Ephesian church around 95 AD (if you take a late view for the writing of Revelation). The Ephesians had heard and heeded the call to faithfulness, but in trying to do things right they had lost sight of the Lord who had made them right (Rev 2:1-7).

So, we can see the Ephesian church over a period of 40 years (or perhaps over a period of 15 years if we take an early date for Revelation = 67 AD). [AD 53, 54, 57, 62, 65, 66, & (67 or 95)].

The culture of Ephesus

Ephesus was a major city in the region of "Asia Minor" and was the 4th largest city in the world at the time, with a population between 50,000 and 100,000. It was the major centre of the region for trade, culture, commerce, politics and religion. There were two things for which it was famous: The huge theatre with a seating capacity of 50,000 and the Temple of Diana (or Artemis) which

was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. [Some of the others were the Egyptian pyramids, The hanging gardens of Babylon, The lighthouse at Alexandria, The Colossus of Rhodes.]

In the time of Paul, a harbour existed near the city, but it has since silted up and is now 3 miles (5 km) away. Great wide paved roads such as the Arcadian way went through the city linking the centres of trade of the harbour and the Agora (marketplace).

The culture was geared around the Roman governance of the area as a pro-consulate, and the Greek culture that had inhabited the site for hundreds of years. The Greek culture was centred on the worship of the God Artemis, (also called Diana). Whole industries had grown around supporting the temple of Diana, and making silver “charms” with Diana engraved on them. The practice of “magical arts” in the city was also a major industry.

The style of the letter

The style of the Pastoral Epistles are very different to the other writings of Paul. The letters are personal (in that they are written to specific individuals), and are full of practical instruction. Some of the differences are explained by the time differences, which gives both a different set of problems to be addressed, and a greater maturity in the writer.

The differences in style have caused much discussion over the genuineness of the authorship, although Paul’s authorship was not seriously challenged until recent times.

First Timothy lacks much of the ordinary thanks-giving and prayers that Paul normally begins with in his letters, and also the personal greetings from other brethren at the close – compared also to 2nd Timothy. It is very business like.

Paul writes to Timothy with the instructions rather than to the church, as the problems in the leadership are unlikely to get a fair hearing. Consequently, Paul has empowered Timothy to correct the situation, and he gives an emphasis on the qualifications that are required in the elders rather than on the functions that they are required to perform.

Outline of the letter

The following outline is taken from Fee & Stuart²

- 1:1- 2 *Salutation*
- 1:3- 20 *First Charge to Timothy*
- 2:1-15 *Instructions on Community Matters*
- 3:1 - 13 *Qualifications for Church Leaders*
- 3:14- 4:5 *The Purpose for the Letter*
- 4:6 - 16 *Renewed Charge to Timothy*
- 5:1 - 6:2b *On Widows and Elders (and Slaves)*
- 6:2c - 10 *Final Indictment of the False Teachers*
- 6:11-20 *Final Charge to Timothy*

² Fee, Gordon D & Stuart, Douglas “How to Read the Bible Book by Book” Zondervan ISBN 0-310-211118-2