BOOK BACKGROUND STUDY FORM

1. SUBJECT   Ephesus (Book of Ephesians)

2. REFERENCE TOOLS USED

Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible
New Bible Dictionary
The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible

3. GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The city was situated on the western coast of Asia Minor at the mouth of the Cayster River, one of the four major east-west valleys that ended in the Aegean Sea. It was at the beginning of a major highway that went eastward across Asia Minor into Syria, then into Mesopotamia, Persia, and India.

Ephesus was a large port city and had a population of around 400,000 in the apostle Paul's time. It was the most important city in the Roman province of Asia. Its strategic location caused it to be the meeting place of the land and sea trade routes in that part of the world in those days.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ephesus was an ancient city whose origins are lost in the mists of antiquity. It was known as an important port city in the days of the ancient Hittites (early 1300s B.C.).

Around 1080 B.C. it was taken and colonized by the Greeks from across the Aegean Sea, and Greek ways and influences were introduced. Five centuries later it was taken by the legendary King Croesus, who restored Asian influence to the city.

The Persians took Ephesus in 557 B.C., and two centuries of conflict with the Greeks over it followed. Alexander the Great captured the city in 335 B.C., and the Greek influence prevailed until Roman times.

The Romans took the city in 190 B.C., and it remained in their hands or their allies' hands until after the days of Paul. It became the major city in the Roman province of Asia, although Pergamum remained the capital.

5. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

From the time the Greeks took the city in 1080 B.C., cultural conflict existed between the Asian and Greek ways of life. The original religion included the worship of the mother-goddess whom the Greeks later called Artemis (Diana in the Roman system). Here the original goddess had a shrine, and the Greeks later built a grand temple that became known throughout the whole Mediterranean world.

Being at the crossroads of Europe and the Far East, the city had an international flavor as people of many backgrounds, particularly traders and sailors, mixed here freely. Thus it was a cosmopolitan city, primarily Greek in culture but with Asian underpinnings existing there at the same time. It had all the conveniences of a modern Roman city — gymnasium, stadium, theaters, and central marketplace.

6. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In Paul's day, since it was a city loyal to Rome, Ephesus was governed by the Roman proconsul from Pergamum. It was allowed to have its own government and was divided into "tribes" according to the ethnic composition of its population. In Paul's time there were six tribes, and the representatives to their gathering elected the "town clerk," who was responsible for all public meetings.

Other government officials included the Asiarchs, municipal officers of Rome, and the Neokoros, the temple officials.

7. SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

The city of Ephesus was an important city, and because of its strategic value, Paul and his team headed there on their second missionary journey. Paul later ministered there for some time on his third journey.

Because of its cosmopolitan population, here was an opportunity for ministry to many different kinds of peoples — Romans, Greeks, and the Asians of that part of Asia. Also, a ministry could be had with the travelers and traders, who came both by land and by sea.

Ephesus' history and geography made the city strategic for the planting of churches and then the spreading of the news of the gospel throughout the whole territory around it as well as to many other places through the caravans and shipping.

8. PERSONAL APPLICATION

In a day of population explosion it is my responsibility to witness to Jesus Christ in the strategic places of the world. This means that in my town I need to find out where the strategic centers of people gathering are. Then I should plan to go there, both by myself and with my church, to testify to the grace of God and his salvation. I will talk with Sam and Joe about this, and we will lay plans together for evangelizing our community.

BOOK BACKGROUND STUDY FORM

1. SUBJECT

2. REFERENCE TOOLS USED

3. GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

BOOK BACKGROUND STUDY FORM

5. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

6. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

BOOK BACKGROUND STUDY FORM

7. SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

8. PERSONAL APPLICATION