

Ephesians Series
The City and Culture of Ephesus
The Victor's Song

Ephesians 1:1-2

*1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,
1a. To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The Church at Ephesus or any other city in the Roman or Greek culture faced the same dangers and spiritual pressures, and that was to be holy and without blame, spotless, without wrinkle of blemish or any such thing.

I. The Church and Saints

*1a. To the saints and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:
John the Apostle and Mary, Mother of Jesus
Acts 18-20
(ie) Augustine's City of God (Tale of Two Cities)*

II. The City and Culture

*"At Ephesus"
At Rome, at Corinth, at Laodocia, Hieropolis, Symrna, etc.*

III. The Challenges

"who are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Society Rubs off on the church.

Remember Lot's Wife

The Church at Ephesus or any other city in the Roman or Greek culture faced the same dangers and spiritual pressures.

Philippians 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a **crooked and perverse nation (generation)**, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

1 Peter 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

I. The Church at Ephesus

*1a. To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Acts 18:19-21 – First short visit. Let some there, then on to Jerusalem and back
Acts 19:1-7 – First believers, disciples of John the Baptist, believe, baptized, and receive Holy Spirit
Acts 19:8 – Taught in the synagogue for 3 months turns to Gentiles
Acts 19: 9 – School of Tyrannus for 2 years. Across from library
Acts 19: 11-13 – Special miracles by Paul
Acts 19: 10-17 – Jewish exorcists fail to cast out in Jesus' name
Acts 19: 18-20 – Many believe from witchcraft burn books \$500,000
Acts 19: 22 – Sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia
Acts 19: 23 – Riot breaks out in the theater that seated 25,000. 2 hours of cheers
Acts 20:17-38 – Returns to bid farewell to church elders.

Revelation 2:1-7

Jesus dictates a letter to Ephesus first then six other churches of Asia
(see map)

Apostle John

1. Resident of Ephesus after 70 AD when Temple destroyed
2. Writes Gospel of John at request of bishops of Asia
3. Writes Revelation while on Isle of Patmos, exiled by Emperor Domitian
4. Writes I, 2, 3 John from Ephesus
5. Then returned under Nerva and good restored.
6. Died at about 100 years old.

Mary, Mother of Jesus

John 19:26-27 Behold your mother.

25. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

26. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son,"

27. and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Timothy

I Timothy 1:1-3 – My son in the faith

I Tim 4:14 – Stir up the gift given by laying on of hands

II. The City and Culture

1a. To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The City Of Ephesus (<http://www.padfield.com/2000/ephesus.html>)

A Roman writer once called Ephesus *Lumen Asiae*, The Light of Asia. Ephesus, with a **population of 300,000**, was the chief commercial city of the province and the center of the mother goddess worship of western Asia. In the New Testament era it was the fourth greatest city in the world, after Rome, Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch of Syria.

"**Ephesus was the Gateway of Asia.** One of its distinctions, laid down by statute, was that when the Roman proconsul came to take up office as governor of Asia, he must disembark at Ephesus and enter his province there. For all the travelers and the trade, from the Cayster and the Maeander Valleys, from Galatia, from the Euphrates and from Mesopotamia, Ephesus was the highway to **Rome**. In later times, when the **Christians were brought from Asia to be flung to the lions in the arena in Rome**, Ignatius called Ephesus the **Highway of the Martyrs**." (William Barclay, *The Revelation Of John*, Vol. 1, p. 58).

Ephesus once had a great harbor, but because of the lack of tides in the Mediterranean to clear out the debris, the harbor tended to silt up. It was probably from this harbor that Paul set sail for Macedonia after the Ephesian riot (Acts 20:1).

The main street of the city was the **Arcadian Way** which led from the harbor to the theater. The street was over 100 feet wide and paved with marble slabs. The street was often used for parades and ceremonies, and was flanked on either side by rows of columns 50 feet deep. The street was named in honor of the emperor Arcadius (A.D. 383-408) who enlarged and restored it. At night the street was lit by lanterns.

The **Great Theater** at Ephesus gives us some idea of the elegance of the ancient city in the time of Paul. The construction began during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) and was completed during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117). This massive structure measured 495 feet in diameter and seated an estimated 25,000 people. The great uproar over Diana of the Ephesians took place here (Acts 19).

The **Library of Celsus** built in A.D. 135 by Julius Aguilus in memory of his father, Celsus, who was a Roman senator and governor-general of the province of Asia. Here thousands of parchments and papyri were stored, protected from dampness and worms by a double wall. Estimates of the number of rolls that could be stored in the library vary from 9,500 to 12,000.

Celsus was a lover of books and was given the honor of being buried, not only within the city, but in the vault of his own library among his books. On the first floor of its façade there stood four female statues representing wisdom, fortune, knowledge, and virtue.

Another important street was **Curetes Street**, which derived its name from the Curetes (priests), who guarded the sacred fire of the hestia (hearth) in the prytaneion. The Curetes were a college of priests attached to the service of Artemis. Many inscriptions and reliefs may be seen along the street, including a relief representing **Nike**, the goddess of victory, with a wreath in her left hand and a spike in the right. The most beautiful building on Curetes Street is the **Temple of Hadrian** (A.D. 117-138). The **Fountain of Tragan** (A.D. 98-117) is located on the northern end of the street -- it was dedicated to the Emperor Trajan at the end of the first century.

The Odeion in Ephesus had 22 tiers and accommodated over 1500 spectators. Here musicians played their flutes, lyres, and citharas, and poets recited from Homer.

The Temple Of Diana

The disturbance over Diana of the Ephesians is one of the most prominent stories in the book of Acts (**Acts 19:23-41**). There were 33 temples in the Greco-Roman world where Diana was worshiped. After Paul's preaching in Ephesus had harmed the local silversmiths who made statues of Diana, Paul's companions, **Gaius and Aristarchus**, were dragged into the theater. The disciples would not allow Paul to go into the assembly.

"The Temple of Artemis (or Diana, according to her Roman name) at Ephesus ranked as one of the **Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**. As the twin sister of Apollo and the daughter of Zeus, Artemis was known variously as the moon goddess, the goddess of hunting, and the patroness of young girls. The temple at Ephesus housed the multi-breasted image of Artemis which was reputed to have come directly from Zeus (Acts 19:35). **The temple of Artemis** in Paul's day was supported by 127 columns, each of them 60 meters (197 feet) high. The Ephesians took great pride in this grand edifice. During the Roman period, they promoted the worship of Artemis by minting coins with the inscription, 'Diana of Ephesus.'" (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pp. 345-346).

The temple was four times as large as the Parthenon. Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79) said the temple was constructed on marshy soil to safeguard it against earthquakes.

"For over a thousand years this goddess with her temple provided a focal point for the rich religious, economic, and cultural life of her worshippers. Now hardly one stone can be seen of one of the most famous buildings in the world, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus. Built on

marshy ground not far from the Cayster River, it arose on a site occupied from time to time by several temples of which at least one dates from pre-Greek days. It faced west, toward the sea and the setting sun. Pliny the Younger tells us that the columns in front of the temple were carved with notable events in the life of the Greeks and that the statue of Artemis stood in the inner sanctuary. Some of the statuary from this temple is displayed in the New Hofburg Museum in Vienna. This temple was the first in the world to be **constructed entirely of marble.**" (Everett Blake and Anna Edmonds, *Biblical Sites In Turkey*, p. 119).

"After years of archeological research the ruins of the temple were discovered in 1877 by J. T. Wood. The platform on which the temple stood was 418 by 239 feet, and the temple itself was 342 by 163 feet and had over one hundred columns supporting its roof." (Homer Hailey, *Revelation, An Introduction And Commentary*, p. 120).

SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD

- 1. *The Great Pyramid of Giza***
- 2. *The Hanging Gardens of Babylon***
- 3. *The Statue of Zeus at Olympia***
- 4. *The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus***
- 5. *The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus***
- 6. *The Colossus of Rhodes***
- 7. *The Lighthouse of Alexandria***

III. The Challenge at Ephesus

1a. To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Society Rubs Off

Luke 17:32 Remember Lot's wife.

Ephesians 2:1-6

2 Peter 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)

Isaiah 63:10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Without Spot

Ephesians 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

1 Timothy 6:14 That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the **flesh**, and the lust of the **eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abides for ever.

2. Squeezed Into Their Mold

Romans 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2 Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore **come out from among them**, and be **separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

3. Liberation Theology

Nicolaitans – theology of liberty to sin.

1 Peter 2:16 As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

1 Corinthians 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Squeezed Into The World's Mold

Morality – lust, sexuality

Life Style – participation, differences

Attitudes – thoughts, emotions

Money – covetousness

Entertainments – live for pleasure

Philosophies – liberal persuasions

Politics – what you vote for

Paul's Troubles

Although Luke does not mention Paul being imprisoned while in Ephesus, Paul himself told the church at Corinth, "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had **the sentence of death in ourselves...**" (2 Cor. 1:8-9). On another occasion he spoke of **his fight "with beasts at Ephesus"** (1 Cor. 15:32).

John, First Epistle of

It was evidently **written by John the evangelist, and probably also at Ephesus**, and when the writer was in advanced age. The purpose of the apostle (1:1-4) is to declare the Word of Life to those to whom he writes, in order that they might be united in fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

St John at Ephesus

It is believed that the evangelist St. John had spent his last years in the region around Ephesus and buried in the southern slope of Ayosolug Hill. Three hundred years after the death of Saint Paul, a small chapel was constructed over the grave in the 4th century. The church was changed into a marvelous basilica during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527 -565 AD).

The monumental basilica was in the shape of a cross and was covered with six domes. Its construction, being of stone and brick, is an extremely rare find amongst the architecture of its time. Raised by two steps and covered with marble, the tomb of St John was under the central dome, that was once carried by the four columns at the corners. The columns in the courtyard reveals the monograms of Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora. Constructed in the 5th century AD, the baptistery is north of the nave, with its key hole shape. Rampart walls around the church were constructed for protection from the Arabian attacks in the 7th - 8th centuries AD. The impressive 10th century AD frescoes representing St John, Jesus and a Saint, ornament the chapel. With the invasion of Turks, the chapel was used as a mosque in the 14th century; unfortunately Basilica of Saint John became unusable due to the serious earthquake in the same century.

The excavations around the Basilica of Saint John has been continuing under the supervision of Ekrem Akurgal since 1973, with the financial supports of George B. Quatman.

Virgin Mary at Ephesus

Located on the top of the "Bulbul" mountain 9 km ahead of Ephesus, the shrine of Virgin Mary enjoys a marvelous atmosphere hidden in the green. It is the place where Mary may have spent her last days. Indeed, she may have come in the area together with Saint John, who spent several years in the area to spread Christianity. Mary preferred this remote place rather than living in crowded place.

The house is a typical Roman architectural example, entirely made of stones. In the 4th century AD, a church, combining her house and grave, has been built. The original two-stored house, which consisted of an anteroom (where today candles are proposed), bedroom and praying room (Christian church area) and a room with fireplace (chapel for Muslims). A front kitchen fell into ruins and has been restored in 1940's. Today, only the central part and a room on the right of the altar are open to visitors. From there one can understand that this building looks more like a church than a house. Another interesting place is the "Water of Mary", a source to be found at the exit of the church area and where a rather salt water, with curative properties, can be drunk by all.

Timothy

A young disciple who was Paul's companion in many of his journeyings. His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, are mentioned as eminent for their piety (**2 Tim. 1:5**). We know nothing of his father but that **he was a Greek (Acts 16:1)**.

He is first brought into notice at the time of Paul's second visit to **Lystra** (16:2), where he probably resided, and where it seems he was converted during Paul's first visit to that place (**1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:11**). The apostle having formed a high opinion of his "own son in the faith," arranged that he should become his companion (**Acts 16:3**), and took and circumcised him, so that he might conciliate the Jews.

He was designated to the office of an evangelist (**1 Tim. 4:14**), and went with Paul in his journey through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia; also to Troas and Philippi and Berea (**Acts 17:14**). Thence he followed Paul to Athens, and was sent by him with Silas on a mission to Thessalonica (**17:15; 1 Thess. 3:2**).

We next find him at Corinth (**1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1**) with Paul. He passes now out of sight for a few years, and is again noticed as with the apostle at Ephesus (**Acts 19:22**), whence he is sent on a mission into Macedonia. He accompanied Paul afterwards into Asia (**20:4**), where he was with him for some time.

When the apostle was a prisoner at Rome, Timothy joined him (**Phil. 1:1**), where it appears he also suffered imprisonment (**Heb. 13: 23**). During the apostle's second imprisonment he wrote to Timothy, asking him to rejoin him as soon as possible, and to bring with him certain things which he had left at Troas, his cloak and parchments (**2 Tim. 4:13**). According to tradition, after the apostle's death he settled in Ephesus as his sphere of labor, and there found a martyr's grave.

Nicolaitans:

Nicolaitans: a sect mentioned in (Revelation 2:6,15) whose deeds were strongly condemned. They may have been identical with those who held the doctrine of Balaam. They seem to have held that it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication, in opposition to the decree of the Church rendered in (Acts 15:20,29) The teachers of the Church branded them with a name which expressed their true character. The men who did and taught such things were followers of Balaam. (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11) They, like the false prophet of Pethor, united brave words with evil deeds. In a time of persecution, when the eating or not eating of things sacrificed to idols was more than ever a crucial test of faithfulness, they persuaded men more than ever that was a thing indifferent. (Revelation 2:13,14) This was bad enough, but there was a yet worse evil. Mingling themselves in the orgies of idolatrous feasts, they brought the impurities of those feasts into the meetings of the Christian Church. And all this was done, it must be remembered not simply as an indulgence of appetite: but as a part of a system, supported by a "doctrine," accompanied by the boast of a prophetic illumination, (2 Peter 2:1) It confirms the view which has been taken of their character to find that stress is laid in the first instance on the "deeds" of the Nicolaitans. To hate those deeds is a sign of life in a Church that otherwise is weak and faithless. (Revelation 2:6) To tolerate them is well nigh to forfeit the glory of having been faithful under persecution. (Revelation 2:14,15)

John Gill derived from the Writings of Irenaeus and Hippolytus

"I know that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." The Nicolaitans were a sect of base antinomians which had arisen in those early days of Christianity. They contended that since we are saved by grace and are free from the law, nothing is evil. They made every excuse for lewdness and licentiousness. John Gill tells us that the Nicolaitans "committed fornication, adultery, and all uncleanness, and had their wives in common." All this evil was practiced and promoted in the name of Christian liberty! All true believers, like these Ephesians and like Christ himself, despise those who promote ungodliness in the name of grace.

These seems somewhat unlikely for two reasons.

a. Nicholas, one of the original deacons is mentioned as the founder only by Irenaeus, however his report is refuted by Clement of Alexandria who states that Nicholas was a godly man and taught the way he lived. He therefore confused this Nicholas with the bishop Nicholas of Samaria who was a heretic in the company of Simon Magus.

b. The traditional explanation simply provides us with a type of Gnosticism. In spite of the fact that we know the names of some Gnostic leaders such as Valentinius and Simon Magus, their movements never assumed the names of their teachers. They were simply referred to as "Gnostics". If these men were "antinomian" (against any law for Christians allowing

Christians to live in sexual immorality supported with spiritual doctrine), the followers would have been classified as Gnostics.

The alternative explanation is that Nicolaitans refers to those teachers in the Body of Christ who began to elevate the clergy above the laity, a distinction that did not exist in the Christian Church until the end of the second century. This teaching did not simply recognize that elders (presbuteros and episcopas) along with deacons (diakanos) are valid biblical offices in the church. Although these church offices required the men in leadership to be servants of those to whom they minister, the Nicolaitans began ruling over the laity in a manner condemned by Jesus.

The Temple of Diana of the Ephesians

The temple was a 120-year project started by Croesus of Lydia. It was described by Antipater of Sidon, who compiled a list of the Seven Wonders:

I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, 'Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught (anything) so grand.'" (Antipater, Greek Anthology [IX.58])

The temple was also described by Philon of Byzantium:

I have seen the walls and Hanging Gardens of ancient Babylon, the statue of Olympian Zeus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the mighty work of the high Pyramids and the tomb of Mausolus. But when I saw the temple at Ephesus rising to the clouds, all these other wonders were put in the shade.

From **Error! Reference source not found.**

Worship

Massive crowds 2.5 million people seeing her virginity restored in a parade march of the idols to the river to be washed and virginity restored. Then gather back at the temple to copulate with temple prostitutes. Orgasm or sexual acts is to become one with Artemis. Orgasm or sexual act was being filled, being one with the gods. This was the world's largest, most famous, and most popular fertility goddess. It was Sin City. It give us new meaning to "Sex in the City."

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints; “Not even a hint of immorality among you.”

NIV Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

I John 2:15. Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. 17. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.
