

## “EPHESUS”

And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? (Acts 19:35 NKJV)

Anyone who thinks that feminism is a modern idea needs to read the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. An early extreme example of feminism was the Amazons. Their name is the Persian word for warriors. They lived in all female communities and worshiped a female deity. Ephesus was established as an Amazonian community. They built a temple their to worship their goddess. Their culture and language were Asiatic. They were conquered by Androclus of Athens. The culture and language became Greek. The goddess was renamed Artemis from Greek mythology. The culture became a mixture of oriental and Greek.

Ephesus had a spacious harbor, it was on several main trade routes, it was surrounded by fertile land. The most notable building was the temple. It was destroyed seven times. Each time it was rebuilt more magnificent than before. The temple possessed valuable lands, it controlled the fisheries, its priests were bankers of enormous revenue. People stored their money there for safekeeping. By the time of Christ the temple was 425 feet long and 220 feet wide. It had 127 pillars 60 feet high. There was a stadium 686 feet long and 200 feet wide capable of seating 30,000 people. There were spectacles of animals fighting animals, men fighting men, and men fighting animals. It was here the apostle Paul "fought with beasts." (1 Corinthians 15:32)

The name Ephesus means "desireable." It was conquered by the Lydians, then Persians, then Greeks, and finally by the Romans.

1.) Ephesus was a city that needed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The temple brought thousands of pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire to worship the goddess Diana (Roman name for Artemis). One of the industries of the town was the manufacture and sale of images and shrines for prayers to Diana that the pilgrims took home with them.

The temple was a sanctuary for criminals. No one could be arrested for any crime whatever within bow shot of the walls of the temple. There was all around the temple a village in which thieves, murderers, and other criminals made their homes.

Not only was there a polyglot of Roman, Greek and oriental people, but there were a considerable number of Jews who lived there. This is the only place outside Judea and Galilee that the New Testament records there were disciples of John the Baptist:

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. (Acts 18:24-26 NKJV)

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.

(Acts 19:1-7 NKJV)

These twelve men became the nucleus of the Christian church at Ephesus. No other city received more attention by the apostles. Here Paul, Timothy, and John were ministers.

2. ) Over the years the Apostle Paul was Evangelist, Pastor, and Bishop to the church at Ephesus.

The first time Paul came to Ephesus, he brought Priscilla and Aquila. Paul reasoned in the synagogue for a brief period, then departed, leaving Priscilla and Aquila there. That is how they were there, met Apollos, a disciple of John the Baptist, and taught him the Gospel of Jesus Christ "explained to him the way of God more accurately." Apollos then departed for Corinth to preach in the church Paul had started there.

In the passage I just read Paul brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Ephesus and twelve men were converted and baptized. Paul remained in Ephesus this time for over two years. He reasoned in the synagogue for three months. When the atmosphere there became hostile, he preached and taught in a school run by one of the believers. Paul spent more time in Ephesus than in any other city.

He had much success. Once, those who practiced magic arts brought their books and burned them in a public bonfire. Finally, Demetrius, the silversmith stirred up all those who made and sold images of Diana. There was a huge public gathering in the theater demanding Paul be forced to leave.

Even after Paul left, his pastoral concern for the church at Ephesus continued. When he was on a ship that landed at Miletus, he called for the elders of the church to meet him and his exhortation in Acts 20 is a classic.

Paul also wrote an epistle to the Ephesians, his finest, and theologically the most difficult. It shows how mature was their faith. Finally, he sent Timothy, his son in the faith to be the minister there.

3.) Sometime after Timothy's tenure as pastor, John the beloved disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ became the pastor there. John suffered persecution and for a while was banished to the Isle of Patmos. John wrote the Gospel of John, the First, Second, and Third Epistles of John and the Revelation.

Tradition says that when John was old and no longer able to walk, that he was carried to church on a litter. When the litter would stop, people leaned close to hear what he would say. Invariably, John would say, "Little children, love one another."

In the Revelation Jesus sent letters to seven churches. One of those churches was the one in Ephesus. He wrote:

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'" (Revelation 2:1-7 NKJV)

Today, the harbor has filled in and is a marshland. Nothing remains of the once great city, not even ruins. In 1863 the British Museum spent \$80,000 and six years work excavating before they found the foundation stones of the temple several feet beneath the soil. They are all that remains – gone are the 127 columns; gone are the great treasures of wealth and art. Gone is the statue of Diana which they believed had descended from heaven. The Epistle to the Ephesians is all that remains of that once great city.

