

Welcome To Ephesus

Ephesians 1:1-2 – January 29, 2023

Location, location, location.

People make the neighborhood. (Good vs. bad neighbors.)

THE PLACE – THE PEOPLE – THE PASSAGE

THE PLACE OF EPHEBUS

If you have ever followed the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys through the book of Acts, during his second missionary journey, you saw him take up residency in Corinth. It is on this stay and upon his arrival that he meets Aquilla and his wife Pricilla and having the same trade of leatherworking, become companions. Paul goes in and out of the Synagogue contending with the Jews and eventually focusing on Gentiles.

SHOW THE MAP

Departing from Corinth and after a short stay in Cenchrea, they come to an incredibly affluent port city along the coast of the Aegean Sea in Asia Minor (Modern day Turkey) called Ephesus.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

It's sheer beauty was something to behold.

RICH IN ITS HISTORY

Established in at least 1500 BC (6x older than the United States of America)

- **King Cyrus took control and made it into a prominent trade port.**
2 Chronicles, Ezra, Isaiah, & Daniel.
- **Alexander the Great liberated it, and renamed it after his wife.**
- **By the time Rome took over in 17BC Ephesus was THE most important trade center in all of Asia.** It was also an epicenter for politics and one of the most important intellectual centers of it's time.
 - Home to a major school of philosophy
 - An enormous library called the **Celsus Library.**
 - A political powerhouse of it's time
 - Roman proconsul, the courts of justice in Asia Minor...
 - It was in Ephesus that you would find the **largest amphitheater in the world**
 - Holding up to 50k spectators and a place in which Paul would become quite familiar w/.
 - **Pliny** (*Encyclopedia inventor*) **describes Ephesus as the, "Ornament of Asia."**

Acts 18 into 19 Paul sets sail and leaves Aquilla & Pricilla in Ephesus.

- Apollos comes to town and though he was powerful in speech and HIGHLY educated, he only knew the baptism of John (coming of the Messiah).
- A & P disciple him and **Acts 18:26 ... they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.** (After all, they had been w/ Paul in Corinth & for a time in Ephesus.)

THE PEOPLE OF EPHEBUS

Like neighbors make the neighborhood, The people and their practices make the city.

Not only rich in history and its vibrant landscape, not only in its economy, its trade, and political influence, but it was ***dripping with intellectualism*** and ***soaked in pagan idolatry*** and worship.

RICH IN TRADITION

Even though the city was founded in 1500 BC and possibly even before that, those who lived in Ephesus would have told you that the real beginning of Ephesus came from the gods. *They would have told you that according to legend and Greek Mythology, the Amazons, a group of half-divine warrior women, founded the city. It was named "Apasus," which means "city of the Mother Goddess." Artemis/Diana seems to have been considered the Ephesian "mother goddess."* (Think of marriage advice)

One commentator referred to Ephesus as,
"the most splendid seat of idolatry in the whole Pagan world."

Paul brought the Gospel to Ephesus... 54 AD.

Acts 19 continued...

Acts 19:8-10 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, **he departed** from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Those years changed the region of Asia Minor.

- Diseased were healed
- Those possessed by evil spirits were set free
- Political leaders & officials were won over by the Gospel & became friends.
- Sorcerers were so amazed at the power of God that they tried to use "Jesus" name.
- Ephesus became the place where witchcraft and sorcery went to die

Acts 19:18-20 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all. **And they counted** up the value of them, and *it* totaled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Oracles: prophets and priests of demonic spirits and worship.

- Worship was often driven to appease their god as an attempt to avoid demonic oppression and dark powers intending to bring harm.
- Give them power or get them out of trouble from demonic powers.

High Honor: **Neo Koros** = host to a temple to an emperor

- *The archway that entered a portion of the city, “to Caesar Augustus, who is god.”*
- Augustus the Divine
- Domitian - selected Ephesus to worship him... all gods holding him up.
 - The second most brutal persecutor of Christians.

TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS/DIANA 3x

- Artemis (Greek Mythology)/Diana (Roman Mythology)
- Temple was enormous and considered one of the **seven wonders of the world**.
 - Temple: 150 yards long (1.5 football fields) 127 pillars of marble,
- She was considered, “**Mother Goddess**” and Protector of nature, children, & animals.
- **Grove of trees**
 - TREE OF LIFE: touched for favor in pregnancy, prosperity, and vitality.

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The **tree of life** was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the **tree of life**.

Revelation 2:7 “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.”’

- **Worship of Diana was a HUGE economic staple.**
 - In fact, the worship of Diana was so immense and the culture so saturated, it became the banking system of the region. People’s lively hoods were founded upon false worship and idolatry.

Acts 19:23-31

Silversmiths... rioted and shouted for 2 hours straight.

AND FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER... A CHURCH.

All of this and one message, one Gospel, one truth shook the most prominent city of its time to the core!

It wasn't Paul or the church... it was the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was a city where everyone could have just about everything they wanted... but many chose Jesus!

Welch Revival

I thought he was the leader of the revival. OH NO! You mean the newspapers had it all wrong? God certainly uses Mr. Robins but the Holy Spirit is the leader of the revival. Galley responds, don't we always say that. His friend William responded. Brother Galley, we MEAN that. Robins might show up at my church tonight but either way, the LORD will be there.

THE PASSAGE OF EPHESUS

It's been 6 years since Paul left Ephesus

Paul cared for the church so much that he commissioned Timothy to remain and build.

Superstitious – Timothy was told to establish a healthy doctrine, establish elders, and charge them that they teach no other doctrine. **It was a theological tightrope.**

Written by Paul. (IN prison)

Most likely during his house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30)

The Crown Jewel – I will teach with all my heart and mind... if you learn with all your heart and mind.

Thessalonica – cared for like a mom or dad

Philippians – convinced that God would complete the good work

Galatians – Intensity about the deception that was being sown and believed

Colossians – There were philosophical and sociological ideas diluting the work of the church.

Ephesians – Deep desire for them to know the foundational doctrines of Christianity and live it

Themes/Sections

- Chapters 1-3 are mostly foundational doctrines and teaching that are not only important but essential to the Christian Faith.
- Chapters 4-6 the application of those doctrines and the life that a follower of Christ is called to live.

Ephesians 1:1-2

Apostle = by the will of God

Your call is not found in pursuing your interests, God's call is found when pursuing Him.

Saints in Ephesus

Saint: *hagios* - That which is holy, consecrated or set apart, blameless.

Matthew 4:5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

Luke 1:72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant,

Acts 7:33 'Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.

Those who have been set apart by the Lord.

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; **who once were** not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Faithful In Christ Jesus

To the Saints in Ephesus, and **faithful** in Christ Jesus.

Saints is a title - Faithful is a description

Nicolaitans: the body didn't matter just the soul.

It would have been normal to blend in and costly to be sold out to the cause of Christ.

Marriage is not just committing to one person but simultaneously denying 4 billion others.

Identifying as _____ Christian/associated to Christ.

You could be anything you wanted as long as you agreed in Caesar No matter what you worshiped it was a part of an "**all-inclusive**" worship system. ***And now you were the only voice saying that while all roads may lead to Rome, there is only one way to heaven and that is Jesus.***

Everyone worshiped at the temple... it would have been "normal" to participate in worship, festivals, and traditions including a massive parade and procession of drunkenness and sensuality. To be of the priesthood you mutilate yourself to join.

Ephesians 6:24 sincere – Gold vs. gold plated.

Letter to Ephesus: Revelation 2:1-7

Done it all right... at the expense of leaving their first love.