

The Addresses to the Seven Churches: Ephesus

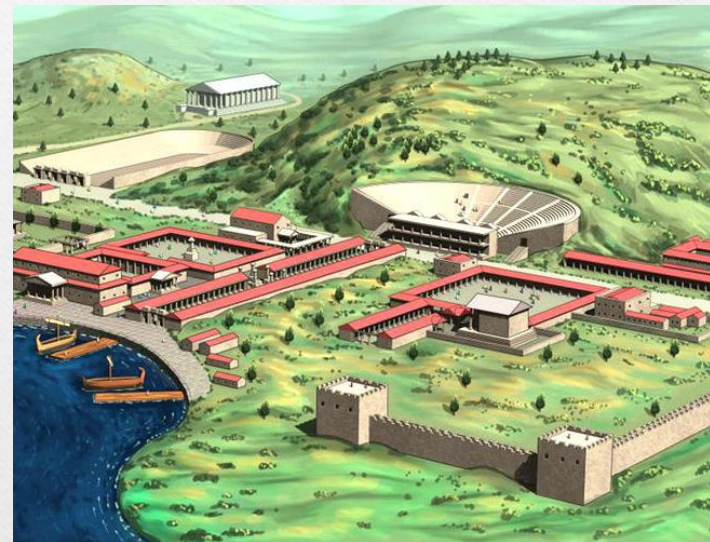
Catford 10th November 2018

Session: 3

Ephesus: A Seaport City

A seaport on main Rome to the east route (Acts 18:21. **Materially prosperous but immoral**)

- Paul, Aquila and Priscilla sailed there from Corinth (Acts 18:18, 21)
- Apollos also visited (Acts 18:24-28)
- Paul returned (as promised) during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23; 19:1)
- (Warnings about material riches: 1 Tim. 6:9-11, 17-19. Immorality: Eph. 4:19, 22; 5:3-5 etc.)

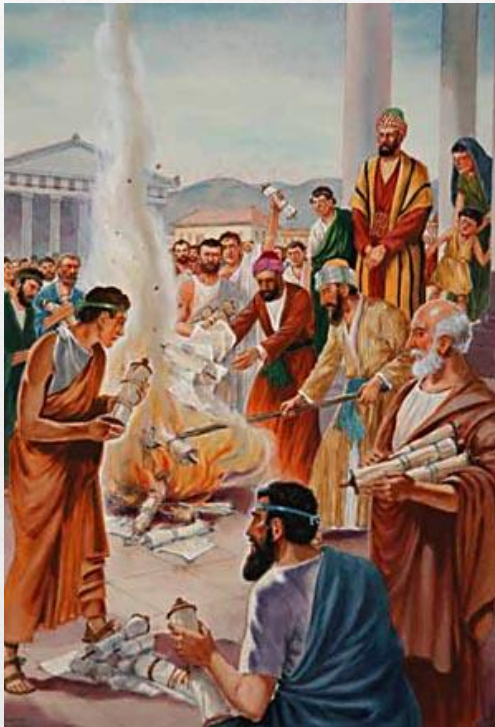


Ephesus: A Centre of Judaism

Home to many Jews of the diaspora (Acts 18:19, 19:8; Rom. 1:16, 2:9, 10)

- ‘... entering... into the synagogue he (Paul) reasoned with the Jews’ (Acts 18:19)
- ‘... Apollos... spoke and taught exactly the things concerning Jesus... And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue’ (Acts 18:25-26)
- ‘And entering into the synagogue, he (Paul) spoke boldly during three months reasoning and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God’ (Acts 19:8)
- ‘But when some were hardened and disbelieved, speaking evil of the way... he left them and separated the disciples’ (Acts 19:9)
- (Warnings about law-teachers and endless genealogies: 1 Tim. 1:4, 7)

Ephesus: A Centre of the Occult



A centre for the magical arts (often called 'Ephesian writings.' Acts 19:19)

- 'And many of those that practised curious arts brought their books of charms and burnt them before all. And they reckoned up the prices of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver' (Acts 19:19)
- 'Thus with might the word of the Lord increased and prevailed' (Acts 19:20)
- (Warning about spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies: Eph. 6:10-20)

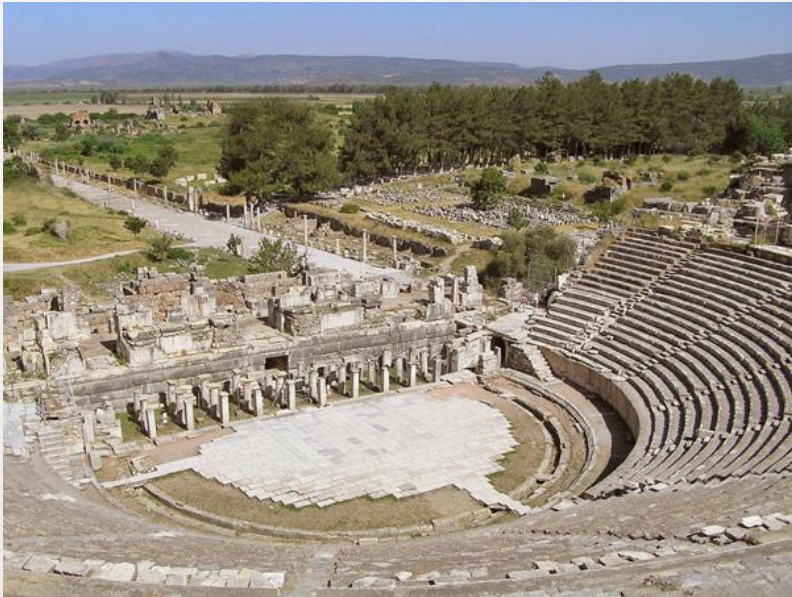
Ephesus: A Centre of idolatry

**Famous for shrine of Artemis (Greek.
Diana: Latin. Acts 19:23-41.)**

- 'Demetrius, a silver-beater, making silver temples of Artemis... said Men, ye know that our well-living arises from this work
- Now not only there is danger for us that our business come into discredit, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be counted for nothing' (Acts 19:24-28)
- (Warning about idolatry: 'For this ye are [well] informed of, knowing that no... idolater, has inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God.' Eph. 5:5)



Ephesus: A Centre of Roman Administration and Culture



The capital city of the Roman province of Asia

- ‘... and some of the Asiarchs’ (the elite of Asia) ‘also, who were his friends, sent to him and urged him not to throw himself into the theatre’ (Acts 19:30-31)
- ‘If, [to speak] after the manner of man, I have fought with beasts in Ephesus, what is the profit to me if [those that are] dead do not rise?’ (1 Cor. 15:32)
- (Warning about Roman fashion: ‘... that the women ... adorn themselves with modesty and discretion, not with plaited [hair] and gold, or pearls, or costly clothing.’ 1 Tim. 2:9)

Ephesus: A Timeline

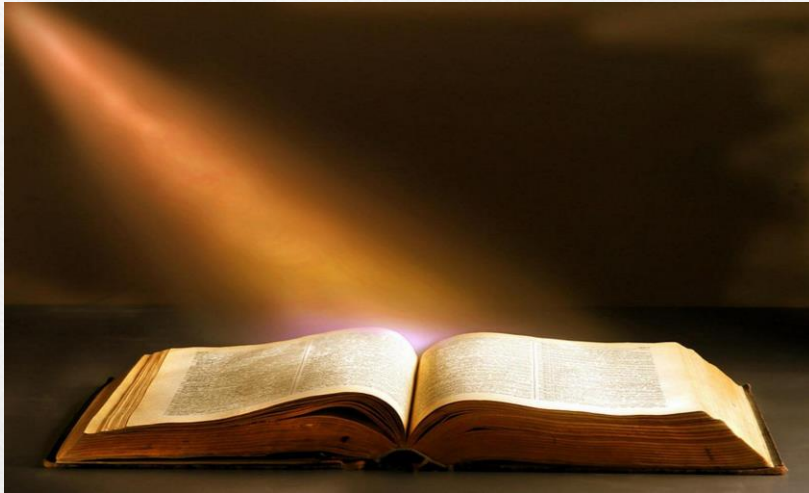
- **AD 62** 'To the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus who are at Ephesus' (Eph. 1:1)
- **AD 66** 'Thou knowest this, that all who [are] in Asia, of whom is Phygellus and Hermogenes, have turned away from me' (2 Tim. 1:15)
- **AD 95** 'Thou hast left thy first love' (Rev. 2:4)

The Prophetic view

- The seven addresses give a complete prophetic history of Christendom
- The address to Ephesus covers the period from approximately AD 57 to AD 167
- From end of Apostolic age (Acts 20:38) to AD 167 when Christianity became a crime against the Roman state



‘To the angel of the assembly at Ephesus write:’ (Rev. 2:1)



Addressee

- That element of the assembly at Ephesus responsible for its state
- Those who bring the ministry of the Word of God to it and (Eph. 4:11)
- Those who lead and exercise oversight amongst the saints (Heb. 13:7-8, 17; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 5:17)
- (‘... considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come.’ Heb. 13:7-8)

‘These things says he that holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps’ (Rev. 2:1)

Sender

- The One who is the source of all heavenly light
- Who will always sustain those responsible to bring it, as they look to Him
- Who constantly searches the state of the assemblies
- Is it being true to its divine constitution (established in righteousness) and calling (heavenly in character)?
- Is the light of its testimony shining without hindrance?



‘I know thy works and thy labour, and thine endurance, and that thou canst not bear evil men; and that thou hast tried them who say that themselves are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars;’ (Rev. 2:2)

Recognition of what is Positive

- I know (to ‘know’ perfectly. See John 8:55)
(How active they were for Him!)
- Thy works (toil), and thy labour (producing weariness) and thine endurance (an abiding under trial)
(But not work of faith, labour of love and enduring constancy of hope. 1 Thess. 1:3)
- And thou hast tried them who say...
(Claims that people made were tested. Things were not allowed to develop unchallenged or unchecked)

**‘and endurest, and hast borne for my name’s sake,
and hast not wearied... But this thou hast, that
thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitanes, which *I*
also hate.’ (Rev. 2:3)**

Recognition of what is Positive

- They continued in the trial, not running away from it
- They bore the burden of the testimony to His Name and were identified with Him in His reproach
- They hated the works of the Nicolaitanes.
(‘The essence of Nicolaitanism seems to have been the abuse of grace to the disregard of plain morality.’ WK)
- Disconnecting our spiritual life from the lives we live in the body.
(What then shall we say? Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Rom. 6:1)
- There are things that the Lord (and divine love) hates
- A model assembly?

‘but I have ~~some~~what against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.’ (Rev. 2:4, 6)

Rebuke

- NOT an insignificant matter!
- First (prōtos) love: chief, best (Mk. 6:21; Lk. 15:22)
- The eye single (Matt. 6:22)
- The heart undivided (James 1:8, 4:8; Psa. 119:113)
- Christ presiding and having no rival there (Col. 3:15)
- Leading us practically to put Him first in everything (Col. 1:18)



The Heart in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

- ‘Being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know...’ (Eph. 1:18)
The key to SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE
- ‘That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith’ (Eph. 3:17)
The key to SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING and CAPACITY
- ‘Singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord’ (Eph. 5:19)
The key to SPIRITUAL HAPPINESS and COMMUNION with the LORD
- ‘In simplicity of your heart as to Christ’ (Eph. 6:5)
The key to a SPIRITUAL WALK and SERVICE that are ACCEPTABLE to the LORD

‘Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works:’ (Rev. 2:5)

Call to repentance

- Remember their first state when all their joy was in Christ
(‘As well the singers as the dancers [shall say], All my springs are in thee.’ Psa. 87:7)
- (The name Ephesus means ‘desirable’)
- Repentance is always for sin (NT. Repent/Repentance x 47)
- A change of mind or purpose after moral reflection
- First works flow from first love for Christ



‘but if not, I am coming to thee, and I will remove thy lamp out of its place, except thou shalt repent (Rev. 2:5)



Call to repentance

- The Lord gives space for repentance (Rev. 2:21)
- But consequences follow where there is no repentance or recovery
- If there is little love for Christ and His people how can they be a witness for Him?
- What bears Christ's Name ceases to be the light-bearer intended (though not necessarily a church)
- (We can understand why what begins here ends with Christ outside the assembly in Laodicea)

‘He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies’ (Rev. 2:7)

Call to hear

- The letters to the seven assemblies not only a prophetic history of Christendom
- Taken together they address the primary dangers that we face
- ‘Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, Attention than the fat of rams’ (1 Sam. 15:22)
- The Holy Spirit would bring home to each conscience the particular correction that we need



Did they hear?

- There may have been a (partial) response but
- Paul had already warned (Acts 20:28-30):
- ‘Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock... [For] *I* know [this,] that there will come in amongst you after my departure grievous wolves, not sparing the flock;
- and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them’
- Later in the period covered by this ‘phase’ of the assembly their watchfulness did wane and evil entered in that wasn’t deal with

Did they hear?

- It became a time of great ecclesiastical pretension:
- **In AD 96** Clement, bishop of Rome (died AD 99), wrote to the Corinthians about the bishop's office (commonly called 1 Clement)
- The first of the so-called 'Apostolic Fathers'
- His letter reflects three principal characteristics that began to mark the assemblies everywhere:
- The idea that the apostles themselves instituted the system of apostolic succession;
- The idea of influence (consent) of the whole church concerning the appointment of bishops;
- The application of Old Testament prophecy to the church. There was a failure to see the difference between Israel and the church

Did they hear?

In AD 107 Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (c. 35 AD–c. 108 AD), wrote:

‘Let no man do aught of things pertaining to the church apart from the bishop. Let that be a valid eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it... it is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve, this is well-pleasing also to God...’

(While travelling from Antioch to Rome he had an interview with delegates from Ephesus and wrote a letter to the Assembly there)

Did they hear?

Ignatius: Letter to Ephesus

- ‘... for Jesus Christ... is the mind of the Father, **even as the bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth are in the mind of Jesus Christ.**
- ... **I congratulate you who are closely joined with him (the Bishop)** as the Church is with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, that all things may be harmonious in unity.
- ... For every one whom the Master of the household sendeth to be steward over His own house, we ought so to receive as Him that sent him. **Plainly therefore we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself.**

Did they hear?

- Justin Martyr: First Apology (155 AD-157 AD)
- Baptismal regeneration:
- As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. **Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven...' (Chapter 61)**

Did they hear?

- Justin Martyr: First Apology (155 AD-157 AD)
- **Deity of Christ**
- ‘Not one of the fathers, so-called, saving Irenaeus, held the full deity of Christ, or held redemption as Irenaeus did, who was a saint. They were affected with Platonic philosophy, which brought out Arianism after. Justin Martyr positively declares that the supreme God could not become a man - that it was a certain inferior *Logos* who did.’ (J. N. Darby, Ephesians 1:9)
- **The Lord’s second coming**
- ‘The second (coming), when it is proclaimed that He will come with glory out of heaven with His angelic army when He will raise the bodies of all men that have existed, and those of the worthy will clothe with incorruptibility, and of the unjust will send into fire with eternal sense or feeling (*aisthesis*— perception of what they are in) with the wicked demons.’ (Chapter 52)

‘To him that overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God’ (Rev. 2:7)

Promise to the Overcomer:

- It is the promise of a future portion ‘in the paradise of God’ (Where God dwells, not the earthly paradise that was made for man)
- The ‘eternal life’ which is ours in the Lord Jesus now, will be our enjoyed portion for ever (1 John 5:11,13)
- Enjoying this life involves abiding in the love of the Father and the Son (John 17:3)
- Abiding in this love NOW we will reject human pretension and
- Keep near to the Lord and His Word (1 Tim. 6:12)

The Lessons for us

- ‘Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life’ (Prov. 4:23):
(the centre of our moral being; the seat of spiritual understanding and decision making)
- Keep ourselves in the love of God! (Jude 21)
- Be true to our divine constitution and calling (1 John 2:29; Heb 3:1)
(practically righteous and heavenly in character and testimony)
- Be dependent and watchful (John 15:5; 1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Peter 4:7)
- Test claims by the Word of God
‘Prove the spirits’ (1 John 4:1)
- Be active for the Lord! (Eph. 4:7)