

#8: The Message to the Church in Ephesus

The Things That Are

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Yet this you do 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 grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God" ' " (Revelation 2:1-7).

The Church

Church or Ekklesia means "to call out" in the Greek. The modern term is "to bring the cream to the top." The concept here is to call a group of unified believers to go public as a Body of free citizens in and through Christ Jesus. The word *church* is always associated with Israel, contrary to the thinking of post-modern believers. The Old Testament (Hebrew) word means "a fire signal" – indicating a group that displays the light or fire for the ages.

This passage contains the message to the church in Ephesus at the end of the Apostolic Age--the church that left its first love for the Groom (Christ Jesus) and turned toward imagery that gave the grave appearance of the True Christ. As in marriage, leaving your first love (wife) is almost always directly related to a sin of adultery; in this case, it is idolatry. Even though all of the warnings given by Christ to the SEVEN Churches are individualized, we need to embrace the personal warnings that come to each Church. Leaving your first love to your Groom is evidence of a turn toward idolatry. This message can affect just about every Body member in the Church today.

The message to the SEVEN churches is the second phase of John's vision. The third phase involves the twenty-four elders. The next phase is the glorified Church with Jesus, after the Bride has been caught up to meet Him in the air (Rapture). Then, in the following chapters, we will see the event of the Great Tribulation unfolding.

The SEVEN churches depict the Church Age from the day of Pentecost to the day of the Rapture. Once the Rapture occurs, we find something significant happen for the Bride.

Read what John said in 1 John about what the Bride receives:

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:1-3).

History of Ephesus—Church #1, AD 96

Neolithic Age

The area surrounding Ephesus was already inhabited during the Neolithic Age (about 5000 BC--the time of Cain) as was revealed by the excavations at the nearby hoyuk (artificial mounds known as “tells”).

Bronze Age

Excavations in recent years have unearthed settlements from the early Bronze Age at the Ayasuluk Hill. In 1954, a burial ground was discovered from the Mycenaean era (1500-1400 BC), close to the ruins of the basilica of St. John. This was the period of the Mycenaean Expansion during the 14th and the 13th centuries BC. Scholars believe that Ephesus was founded on the settlement of the 14th century BC Hittites (descendants of Ham--the cursed son of Noah). This will hold significant meaning as we unfold the continuous history of Christ’s warning to Ephesus.

Dark Ages

The legendary founder of Ephesus was Androklos--son of King Kadros and a prince of Athens. He had to leave his country after the death of his father. According to this legend, he founded Ephesus on the site where the oracle (advice of a demon spirit) of Delphi would later be located. Androklos was both a successful warrior, as well as king. He was able to join the twelve cities of Ionia together into the Ionian League (female leadership). The Greek goddess Artemis and the great Anatolian goddess Kybele led the way. This should already give us insight into why Christ was warning this Church of leaving their first love to the Groom, in any exchange for another love. There is also rich foundational history that helps us understand the “whore” on the back of the red dragon--believed to be known as a “female spiritual leader.”

Archaic Period

About 560 BC, Ephesus was conquered by the Lydians under the mighty King Croesus. Despite ruling harshly, he did treat inhabitants with respect, and even became the main contributor to the construction of the Temple of Artemis (temple of women). This temple also has prophetic significance to the end-times’ Church--being predominately led by women.

Later in the same century, the Lydians (under Croesus) invaded Persia, modern day Iran. After defeating Croesus, the Persians incorporated the Greek cities of Asia Minor (known during the time of the book of Revelation). Please keep in mind that to this very day, Iran believes they have territorial rights of all land west of them. It would be wise of us to keep our eyes on the developments both politically and spiritually on the old Persian Empire. They are of a firm and

immovable belief that they house the leader who will put to death the European Antichrist, who seems to hate the bloodline of their forefather--Ishmael. More said about this later.

Classical Period

Ephesus continued to prosper. But when taxes continued to rise the Ionians, together with Athens and Sparta (the father of democracy), were able to overthrow the Persians from Anatolia. This carries generational hostility to this very day. In 478 *BC*, the Ionian cities participated with financial support by offering the treasure of Apollo (a male Greek and Roman god of prophecy, spiritual guidance, music, and more) to the goddess Athena (female protector of Athens). In those times, the Ephesians were surprisingly modern in their social relations. They allowed strangers to integrate, in order to advance their worship of female knowledge and educational equality. Though the cultist of Artemis was demonically charged, the city became a stronghold of women's rights--the first historical claim to women's rights--all birthed through a goddess who claimed superior dominance over males by having the ability to protect.

Hellenistic Period

When Alexander the Great defeated the Persian forces at the Battle of Granicus in 334 *BC*, the Greek cities of Asia Minor were liberated. Conqueror and king of Macedonia, Alexander the Great was born in 356 *B.C.* in Pella, Macedonia (Rome). During his leadership, he united the Greek city-states and led the Corinthian League. He also became the king of Persia (Iran), Babylon, and Asia, and created Macedonian colonies in Iran. While considering the conquests of Carthage and Rome, Alexander died of malaria in Babylon in 323 *B.C.* After his death in 323 *BC*, Ephesus came under the rule of Lysimachus, one of Alexander's generals. This is why the Ishmaelites in Iran believe that their Mahdi will come out and assassinate the "Alexander the Great of Europe"--the Roman Antichrist spoken about in the book of Revelation. This gives us a very "here and now" look at the war that Iran continues to threaten to those who are of the descendants of the culture and people of Rome--white men.

Malarian crisis: As the River Cayster was silting up the harbor, the resulting marshes were the cause of malaria and many deaths among the inhabitants. The people of Ephesus were forced to move to a new settlement 2 kilometers (1 ½ miles) away. God destroyed this arrogant city by backing up their waste and sewage. The new settlement was called Arsinoe (mother god of Apollo). Again, God destroyed the new city through Lysimachus (successor of Alexander the Great). The newer city was relocated and the architectural layout remained unchanged for the next 500 years. After the death of Lysimachus, the town took again the name of Ephesus in order to restore their vision of "temple of women."

Roman Period

Stay with me, this is critical history for the book of Revelation. Ephesus was traditionally a Greek territory, but became subject to the Roman Republic and its influence (romance and a people of many lovers). Taxes rose significantly and the city treasuries were methodically plundered. Those in Ephesus were then led by a couple of ruthless generals of Mithridatis the Great (King of Pontus—modern northeastern Turkey). But for a short time, Ephesus became self-governing. Mithridatis the Great was conquered in the First Mithridatic War by Rome, resulting in Ephesus returning to Roman rule in 86 *BC*--a perfect setup for the fulfillment of

prophecies of Christ Jesus. When Augustus (founder of the Roman Empire) became emperor in 27 BC, he made Ephesus (instead of Pergamum—the throne place of Satan) the capital. It became the seat of the governor, growing into a metropolis and a major center of commerce. It was second in importance and size only to Rome, making it the largest city in Roman Asia and of the day. It was known as the “sister” to Rome itself. Ephesus was at its peak during the first and second century AD (the time of John’s writings). The Church itself was under heavy influence by the local religion--“temple of women.” This, by most historians’ research, is the reason why Jesus was rebuking them for leaving their first love and turning to idol worship.

Christian History

Ephesus became an important center for early Christianity from the 50s AD. Paul used it as a base, spending more than two years there on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8, 19:10, 20:31). He became embroiled in a dispute with artisans, whose livelihood depended on selling the statuettes of Artemis (female goddess) in the Temple of Artemis (Acts 19:23–41). He wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (possibly from the "Paul tower" close to the harbor, where he was imprisoned for a short time). Later, according to tradition, Paul wrote to the Christian community at Ephesus while imprisoned in Rome (around AD 62).

Men were being challenged to “be men” in the midst of a female dominant society (Acts 19:35). This female goddess was in full control of men, women, and children. Paul was being used by God to accomplish a mighty work, which was viewed as a male dominate religion--something to which they were not accustomed. He was feared by the political, the religious, and the locals. Power came forth from him in all that he said and did. The Holy Spirit was breaking through the powers of darkness that bound the city. The leaders of goddess Diana hated Paul with disdain. John, too, was next in line for some local abuse. John made the city of Ephesus his ministry headquarters, living there for thirty years. God assigned him this territory for obvious reasons.

The Apostle John lived in Asia Minor (Anatolia) in the last decades of the first century and from Ephesus, had guided the SEVEN Churches of that province. After Domitian's death, the Apostle returned to Ephesus during the reign of Trajan and died at Ephesus about AD 100 at a great old age. During John’s time of writing, the Ephesus Church was still strong, but losing sight of their first love.

In keeping with the emphasis on “women’s rights” and goddess worship, in modern times, the House of the Virgin Mary is believed to have been the last home of Mary, mother of Jesus. It is a popular place of pilgrimage, which has been visited by three recent popes. It is a place the Roman Catholic Church believes to be their heritage. In fact, the Church of Mary, close to the harbor of Ephesus, was the setting for the Third Ecumenical Council (of the universal church) in AD 431, resulting in the condemnation of Nestorius (for the belief of Christ being God and man). The universal church is considered by most resident Christian historians to be the final religion led by the whore coming on the back of the red dragon--the Antichrist.

As we can see, the town and Church of Ephesus have always been a significant place for God and mankind. Things pretty much started here and much of the end-times will be focused upon this area, as well as beliefs that have emerged from the time of Cain’s first footprint.

Verse Two: “ *I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.*’ ” God gives the Church of Ephesus a compliment. Even though He gives encouragement, He addresses a major problem with the believers. They did not close their eyes toward evil, even though they were known for testing false teachers--more on an intellectual level.

God wanted the Church of Ephesus to embrace Paul's encouragement to them:

“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).

Many times, those who attempt to master the art of discerning false prophets are themselves warring with the discernment to do so--this was the case with the Church of Ephesus:

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears” (Acts 20:28-31).

Verse Three: “ *‘And you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.*’ ” The compliments continue from the Lord. The Church at Ephesus had endured much and the Lord never takes persecution of His Bride lightly. They are not a Church known for giving up or “jumping ship.” They are an enduring group of believers. They were an example of what endless opposition does for the Church of Christ. But--there is a BUT coming.

Verse Four: “ *‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.’* ” Even though the Ephesian Church was devoted and dedicated to the work of the service of Christ, they had a problem. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22). During Paul's involvement in this Church, they were known for their love. Now that John is commissioned to speak to this Church, they have left their love for each other and the sinners of their day. Since love is at the heart of true Christianity, their lack of love is jeopardizing the Church as a whole. Once the Church and/or Christian leaves its first love, they set themselves up for an apostasy—leaving the foundation of the Church.

This was such a critical issue with Christ, He gave them an ultimatum. Such an ultimatum that it was going to affect their entrance into the kingdom of God.

Verse Five: “ *‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.’* ” Judgment is put in front of them. The Lord is not quick to forget His first love for us and He expects the same devotion in return.

"Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, The love of your betrothals, Your following after Me in the wilderness, Through a land not sown" ' ' " (Jeremiah 2:2).

As most know, the first commandment is to love the Lord with your whole heart and the second commandment is like it; love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:36-39). Love is the pinnacle of all of life. Without it, we have no place in heaven.

Christ gives a two-fold admonishment: remember and repent. Remember, the childlike devotion and commitment to His heart was so critical to Christ. He said that we cannot even enter heaven unless we become like little children. He is asking the Church to evaluate the motives of their hearts and then repent. The Hebrew word picture here for *repent* is "burn the tent in which you came from." True repentance is being required of Ephesus or ... Well, the "or" simply has eternal consequences.

Key Note: This message is to the Church in Ephesus, not to individual Christians. The meaning of "remove your candlestick out of its place" is literal. The Church in Ephesus did not take heed to Christ's words! Their candlestick was removed!! Upon John's death, this city was taken over by the Goths (an ancient Germanic people who settled south of the Baltic and founded kingdoms in many parts of the Roman Empire between the 3rd and the 5th centuries). The Goths ushered in Arianism (followers of the ancient Greek self-proclaimed "Christian" theologian Arius, who argued that Jesus Christ was the highest created being, but was NOT divine). Arianism was pronounced heretical in the 4th century AD by the True Church.

Arius (250-336 AD) lived and taught in Alexandria, Egypt, in the early 4th century. The most controversial of his teachings was that of the relationship between God the Father and the Person of Jesus. He taught that Jesus was *not* God, *nor* was He One with the Father, which remains a popular post-modern belief today. He preached that Jesus was *not* divine in nature, *nor* was He the literal Son of God. Arianists exonerated a local deacon by the name of Nicholas (Nicolaitans—founder of the Roman state church) and considered his teachings harmless, which Christ actually referenced in the book of Revelation. It was "deacon" Nicholas who pushed, with a great deal of success, for a priest (father) to mediate for the "believer"—stating that commoners have no right or access to Christ without a confession to a human priest. This transition of religious belief changed the face of "Christianity" in Ephesus, and ultimately the world, forever. A new form of church popularized the Roman Empire—Catholicism. This growing movement stayed intact until the sons of Ishmael took the territory for Allah, which is the religion that dominates Ephesus today.

Key Note: It was through the Arianism movement that preceded the now ever so present religion of the Islamic Nation—the religion of Ishmael, the illegitimate son of Abraham. For those who do not know, this is the main issue Muslims have against classic Christianity—that Jesus is the actual Son of God.

The message to Ephesus affects all nations and all Christians, indwelt or pew sitters. Individual Christians may not be removed, but the Church's ability to be light unto the world will. This really is the action behind the Great Apostasy—the falling away of the Church spoken of in Revelation.

"For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you" (Isaiah 60:2).

Verses Six and Seven – Jesus Addresses Nicolaitans: “ *'Yet this you do 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 grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'* ”

The Church in Ephesus hated the teachings and works of deacon Nicholas of Antioch and the Nicolaitans (Roman state cultish followers). The goal of deacon Nicholas was to set up rule over the ordinary believers in the church. This probably marked the beginning of the priestly order in the church, which continues in this day in the Roman Catholic Church, as well as others. His impact on the church is profound. He established a system that puts a man as the mediator (priest) between man and God. This removes Christ from the role of being the High Priest and Christians being priests themselves. This is one of the most significant and detrimental actions established in church history. This system is critical for the Antichrist to rule in the final days. With this system in place, the people will have to go through the Antichrist in order to get to god—Satan.

Peter made it quite clear to indwelt believers that they are priests. But this horrid Nicolaitan movement was causing doubt among young believers:

“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

God's design is to establish shepherds to care for the sheep (Body of Christ), not leaders to lord over them and act as mediators between them and the Living God. God makes it clear that the Christians who do not “buy into” this deception will be eating from the Tree of Life.

Now we have the past, present, and future history of the Church in Ephesus. Consider the content and evaluate your heart, family, community, and nation.

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