



TITLE:

History of the Church at Ephesus

TEXT:

Rev. 2:1-7

HISTORY:

- 52 AD: The Apostle Paul visited Ephesus during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21).
 - 53 AD: During his third missionary journey, Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus (Acts 19). It was during this time that the other churches in Asia Minor were planted.
 - 58 AD: Paul addressed the Ephesian elders in Miletus (Acts 20:17-38).
 - 61 AD: Paul wrote the Letter to the Ephesians. It contains strong doctrinal teaching and practical applications.
 - 64 AD: Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy who was in Ephesus to organize affairs within the church.
 - 67 AD: Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy who was in Ephesus.
 - 95 AD: John wrote the book of Revelation where the church at Ephesus was addressed. Jesus Christ gave commendations and a warning to the pastor of the church.
- The church in Ephesus flourished and became a great light in the whole of Asia Minor.

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO THE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS:

THE SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

- Rev. 1:11, 20
- The seven stars are the angels (messengers or pastors) of the seven churches.
- The seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches.
 - The candlestick doesn't give the light but holds the light. The church exalts Jesus Christ who is the light of the world.
 - The use of gold in the candlestick material symbolizes the importance of the church in the perspective of God.
 - Churches operate independently and autonomously.

TO THE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS (2:1-7)

- Jesus Christ walks in the midst of His churches. He knows their works.
- Jesus gave commendations to the pastor of the church at Ephesus.
 - Jesus commends his zeal.
 - "thy works"
 - "thy labour" - "Labour" means intense labour united with trouble and toil.
 - "for my name's sake hast laboured"
 - "hast not fainted"
 - Jesus commends his patience.
 - "thy patience"
 - "hast borne"
 - "hast patience"
 - Jesus commends his opposition against error.
 - "how thou canst not bear them which are evil",
 - "thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars"
 - "thou hates the deeds of Nicolaitans, which I also hate" - "Nicolaitan" means "to conquer the people" and refers to the rise of the unbiblical hierarchical doctrine of church government.
 - He hates what Jesus hates.
- Jesus rebuked him.
 - He had left his first love. He didn't lose it but he left it.
 - Jesus doesn't overlook our sins, even when we engage in numerous good works for Him.

- Jesus gave him a warning.
 - “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen”
 - “Repent”
 - “Do the first works”
 - “Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”
 - It symbolizes the removing the church as the beacon of light within the community.
 - Church at Ephesus was once the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - Jesus today continually gives warnings to each one of us through His word.
 - Do you think it is just a small thing for Jesus Christ to violate His word?
 - Do you think we can do whatever we want to do in the church without any serious consequences?

DECLINE:

- 107 - 110 AD: Ignatius of Antioch, an advocate for the universality of churches and the presence of elders and a governing bishop, wrote a letter addressed to the church at Ephesus. He said, “It is clear, then, that we should regard the bishop as the Lord himself.”
- 190 AD: Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, held a disagreement with Victor, the bishop of Rome, primarily because Polycrates firmly opposed any attempts to impose a uniform date for celebrating Easter.
- 262 AD: the Goths destroyed Ephesus, including the Temple of Artemis.
- 330 AD: The Byzantine Empire initially gained control of Ephesus when Emperor Constantine I established the city as the capital of the Byzantine Empire.
- 431 AD: a Roman Catholic council was held in the Church of Saint Mary which confirmed the Virgin Mary as the mother of God.
- 7th Century: Ephesus suffered from various invasions and was eventually abandoned.
- 1090: Seljuk Turks captured the city during the Byzantine-Seljuk Wars. Islam established its presence in Turkiye when the Seljuks started expanding into eastern Anatolia.
- 1426: The Ottoman Empire conquered Ephesus during the reign of Sultan Murad II.
- Today:
 - Ephesus, near modern-day Selçuk, is now a collection of ruins and is no longer inhabited as a city.
 - Today, Turkiye is 99% Muslim and is now the largest unreached nation in the world and one of the strongest propagators of Islam.
 - In recent years, the government of Turkiye has been specifically targeting foreign Christian missionaries despite their lawful and often decades-long residence in the country.
 - Between 2020 and 2023, the Turkish government placed entry bans on or expelled at least 160 foreign workers and their families.
 - There are incidents of Christian churches being attacked in the past years.
 - Most of the nation’s 85 million Muslims HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL.

CHALLENGE:

- The church in Ephesus used to be the strongest church and great light in Asia Minor, but now Jesus Christ removed its candlestick out of their place.
- Rev. 2:1-7 is the message of Jesus Christ specifically to the pastor of the church at Ephesus. Nevertheless, it also serves as a warning for us: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”
 - We must take the work of the church and our church life seriously. Compare 1 Tim. 3:15.
 - The church today is the beacon of light in our community. If Jesus Christ removed the church at Ephesus from its place, it could also happen to our church.