

“The City of the Great Artemis:
Ephesus”
(Rev 2:5-7)



Truth Matters Church, Inc.

“repent and do the deeds you did at first”



To get an idea of the deeds or works or behavior the church in Ephesus did at first, I'd like to see what Paul had to say about them in the book of Ephesians

- ☞ Paul called them “faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph 1:1)
- ☞ Was made to know “the mystery of His will” (Eph 1:9)
- ☞ Were among those were to “first hope in Christ” (Eph 1:12)
- ☞ Viewed themselves as God’s own possession to the praise of His glory (Eph 1:14)
- ☞ Had the reputation for loving all the saints (Eph 1:15)
- ☞ Paul prayed that they be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of Him (Eph 1:17)
- ☞ Paul prayed that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened so that they may know the hope of their calling (Eph 1:18)

“repent and do the deeds you did at first”



- ☞ Furthermore, Paul acknowledged their former way of life (Eph 2:1-3)
 - ☞ No longer walking according to the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, no longer a son of disobedience, no longer living according to the lust and desires of the flesh and mind, no longer living like children of the devil
- ☞ Paul exhorted them to do “good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph 2:10)
 - ☞ HEART of Rev 2:5 when Jesus said to them “repent and do the deeds you did at first”
 - ☞ The church in Ephesus will depart from this and good works will no longer be a priority
- ☞ Paul hammered home the point that God broke down the barriers between Jews and Gentiles and God was in the business in creating One New Man
- ☞ No longer aliens and strangers, but are part of the family of God
- ☞ We’re not going to go through the entire book of Ephesians, but with these examples, we get the gist of what Jesus is exhorting them to return to

“repent and do the deeds you did at first”



∞ In taking the book of Ephesians into consideration, when Jesus said to remember from where you have fallen, repent and do the deeds you did at first, here is what I believe what likely happened to them:

- ∞ They were no longer faithful in Christ Jesus
- ∞ They forgot the mystery of His will
- ∞ Their hope in Christ dwindled
- ∞ They forgot they were God's own possession
- ∞ They no longer made it a priority to bring Him glory
- ∞ They no longer demonstrated love to all saints
- ∞ They no longer read, studied and applied Scripture to their way of life, decisions

“repent and do the deeds you did at first”



- ⌘ Their hearts were darkened because they reverted to their former way of life
- ⌘ They reverted back to walking according to the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, reverting back to being a son of disobedience, living according to the lust and desires of the flesh and mind, no longer behaving like a child of God and looked more like children of the devil
- ⌘ They built back the wall of hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles
- ⌘ They did not view the OT in all its fullness (they became strangers and aliens)
- ⌘ They did not heed the warnings from Paul/Timothy not to entertain strange doctrines, myths, and endless genealogies
- ⌘ All these are likely characteristics of them at the time and after they received this letter

⌘ Let's look at the last part of verse 5

Exposit Rev 2:5b



5b or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent.

- ∞ “or else” is a warning and threat [i.e. parents even say this to our children]
- ∞ “I am coming to you” – Jesus is still speaking
- ∞ “coming” is erchomai which means to arrive
- ∞ “to you” – ROE#4 to the church of Ephesus
- ∞ “will remove” is future tense, prophecy
 - ∞ “remove” is keneō which means to move from its place
- ∞ “lampstand out of its place” [more on this]

“lampstand out of its place”



- ∞ “lampstand” is luchnia which is used to describe the candlestick that holds the lantern (luchnos)
- ∞ To understand what’s behind this statement, we’ll look at the Beatitudes:
Matthew 5:14-16 (Light of the world)
14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp (luchnos) and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand (luchnia), and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 **Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**
- ∞ INTERPRETATION: if the church in Ephesus does not repent, no longer does good works nor deeds nor behavior, no longer seeks to glorify their Father who is in heaven, Jesus (the One who hold the 7 stars in His right hand) will personally come and remove their lampstand out of its place, Ephesus will no longer be a city set on a hill nor a light of the world - if they do not repent

Exposit Rev 2:6



6 Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

∞ “Yes this you do have” what we’ll find is that not all of the 7 churches were judged the same

∞ Sometimes good and evil deeds are mentioned

∞ Ephesus

∞ Pergamum

∞ Thyatira

∞ Sardis

∞ Sometimes only good deeds are mentioned

∞ Smyrna

∞ Philadelphia

∞ Sometimes only evil deeds are mentioned

∞ Laodicea

Exposit Rev 2:6



6 Yet this you do have, **that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans**, which I also hate.

∞ “hate” is miséō which has implications to have ill will in words and conduct

∞ miséō is the opposite of agapáo

∞ “deeds” which we touched on in v.2 can be rendered works or behavior

∞ “the Nicolaitans” [more on this]

“Nicolaitans”



- ∞ Just like Christians means followers of Jesus Christ
- ∞ Nicolaitans means followers of Nicolas... well who's Nicolas?
- ∞ First place to look is Scripture.
 - ∞ Are there any Nicolas's in Scripture?
- ∞ Well yes, and in fact, there was just one Nicolas in Acts...

“Nicolaitans”



Acts 6:3-6 (there was a complaint by the Greek speaking Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the distribution of food)

3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” 5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and **Nicolas**, a proselyte from Antioch. 6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

☞ So can this Nicolas be implicated with the “Nicolaitans”?

☞ Some sources out there argue that the early church attributed the Nicolaitans to Nicolas from Antioch in Acts 6:5

☞ But here is why I can't agree to that...

“Nicolaitans”



- ∞ Because verse 6 says “And these [the 7 men, including Nicolas] they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they [the apostles] laid their hands on them [the 7 men, including Nicolas]”
- ∞ So for me, I can't agree with the notion that the apostles who received the Holy Spirit, including Peter who was given the keys (kleis) of the kingdom of heaven, laid their hands on someone, only to later advocate for a different doctrine which Jesus hates
- ∞ This is to say, unfortunately, Scripture gives us little to work with
- ∞ But it does give us a few things to work with
- ∞ And we'll go with that

“Nicolaitans”



- ∞ “Nicolaitans” is derived from Nikolaos which is a compound of nikos and laos
 - ∞ Nikos means to conquer and subdue
 - ∞ Laos means for the people
- ∞ So the meaning of this name is literally to conquer and subdue for the people
 - ∞ We see the spirit of this in some religions today
 - ∞ The desire to conquer and subdue nations in the name of religion and for the people
- ∞ The other time Nicolaitans is mentioned is in the letter to Pergamum:
Revelation 2:14-15
14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the **teaching of the Nicolaitans**.

“Nicolaitans”



- ∞ In fact, the letter to Pergamum turns out to be pretty insightful
- ∞ Balaam and Balak are mentioned and compared with the teaching of the Nicolaitans:
Revelation 2:14-15
14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the **teaching of Balaam**, who kept **teaching Balak** to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the **teaching of the Nicolaitans**.
- ∞ The teaching of the Nicolaitans was the same or similar teaching to that of Balaam and Balak
- ∞ In particular, these teachings put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and commit acts of immorality
 - ∞ This was against the mandate from the Council held in Jerusalem in Acts 15 (let's go there)

“Nicolaitans”



Acts 15:13-21 (Judaizers debated with Paul and Barnabas concerning circumcision causing their visit to the apostles in Jerusalem and the Council is rendering a verdict)

13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, “Brethren, listen to me.
14 Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 ‘AFTER THESE THINGS I will return,
AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN,
AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS,
AND I WILL RESTORE IT,
17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD,
AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,’
18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.

“Nicolaitans”



19 Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that **they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood**. 21 For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

- ❧ So whoever or where ever this sect of the Nicolaitans came or originated from, encouraged believers, especially Jewish believers, that it's ok to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of spiritual adultery
- ❧ So in verse 6, Jesus was at least commending the church in Ephesus for hating such teaching, who were likely advocated by false apostles mentioned or Judaizers.
- ❧ History does also tell us that there may be a connection between Gnosticism and Nicolaitans doctrine, which would be consistent with the teachings of Balaam/Balak
- ❧ Now let's look at 7a, then 7b...

Exposit Rev 2:7a



7a He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

∞ "He who has an ear, let him hear" this echoes Isaiah:

Isaiah 28:23

23 Give ear and hear my voice,

Listen and hear my words.

∞ On the surface, this is a catchy phrase

∞ But, it's a call or command to listen and obey OR else

∞ "what the Spirit says" – mystery of the trinity; in Revelation the embodiment of Father and Son are both seen, but not the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit is it's own Person, yet the same Spirit of the Father and the Son

Exposit Rev 2:7b



7b To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

∞ "To him who overcomes" who is that speaking of?

∞ ROE#1 (Must use Scripture with Scripture)

1 John 5:5

Who is the one who overcomes the world, but **he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

∞ This is a promise not limited to the believers in Ephesus, but to all who believes that Jesus is the Son of God!

∞ Peter's confession upon which Christ will build His church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it!

∞ "tree of life" and "Paradise of God" - I'm not going to get too much into it for I covered this extensively in our study of "Where do we go when we die?" but I will say this...

Exposit Rev 2:7b



- ∞ Just like there was a “tree of life” in the Garden of Eden
- ∞ There is a “tree of life” in the Paradise of God
 - ∞ It can be said that PRE-Fall, Adam and Eve were in the Paradise of the Garden of Eden for God walked in the cool of the day and spoke with them
- ∞ POST-Fall: Paradise was where Abraham and the Lazarus were
- ∞ Paradise is synonymous with heaven, but distinct from the heavenly court where God the Father’s throne is
- ∞ The promise by the very lips of our Lord Jesus is if we believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and regardless, of what other so-called apostles or prophets or Jews may claim we are to remain faithful to the end, and if we do, Jesus will not only give us eternal life, but will grant us to eat from the tree of life which is in the Paradise of His Father!
 - ∞ Adam and Eve were prevented from doing so; but ALL believers won’t be!

Exposit Rev 2:7b



- ∞ As will be mentioned in our video presentation, Artemis was a goddess of fertility, and as such, there was a gigantic tree in the outer court that symbolized life
 - ∞ People would come to touch, say prayers seeking health, life, and abundance and worship this tree
 - ∞ This tree was the source of hope and fullness of life for the Ephesians
- ∞ With this historical context in mind, it brings the text to life
- ∞ Since Ephesians had their own version of the “Tree of Life”, Jesus calls their attention to the true “Tree of Life” which is not on earth, but in “the Paradise of God”
 - ∞ Jesus’ promise is if they stay faithful to Him (and not Artemis or any other claimed deity), He will give them the right to eat from true Tree of Life which is in heaven!

Other Closing Thoughts



∞ One last characteristic of the church in Ephesus, Paul told Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:3-4

3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, **remain on at Ephesus** so that you may **instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,** 4 **nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies,** which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

∞ Which raises the question, what does history tell us about what happened to this great town of Ephesus, including the church there?

Other Closing Thoughts



- ❧ ~262AD the Goth's plundered Ephesus and destroyed the city, including, the temple of Artemis
- ❧ Around 170 years later, the church in Ephesus was the first church dedicated to Mary in the 3rd century
 - ❧ ~431AD: The Council of Ephesus held meeting there in to discuss the role of Mary as the "Mother of God"
 - ❧ They agreed that Mary and Saint John came to Ephesus and died there
 - ❧ ~449AD: The Council declared that the church of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus was the center of Christianity
- ❧ Did not sound like the Elders in Ephesus took heed to the words of Paul nor Timothy of not teaching strange doctrines, myths, and endless genealogies

Artemis of the Ephesians



Another OBSERVATION

In Ephesus:

- ∞ The goddess *Cybele* was a woman
- ∞ The goddess *Artemis* or *Diana* (after Cybele) was a woman
- ∞ Both shared “Great Mother of Life” titles
- ∞ The church of Virgin Mary was in Ephesus
- ∞ There were councils held in Ephesus on how to view Mary
- ∞ It was determined that she is/was immaculate
 - ∞ Sinless
 - ∞ Great Mother of God
 - ∞ Aka a goddess

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- ❧ It was determined that she is/was immaculate
 - ❧ Sinless
 - ❧ Great Mother of God
 - ❧ Aka a goddess
- ❧ “Artemis of the Ephesians” sure looks similar to “Mary the Mother of God” who was birthed in Ephesus!



Artemis vs. Mary



Artemis

Mary

Another OBSERVATION

- “the Great Artemis of the Ephesians” sure looks a lot like and similar to “Mary the Mother of God” of the Catholic church who was birthed in Ephesus!

