

THE STONES OF GOD'S WITNESS: EPHEBUS – LIVING IN A GODLESS CULTURE

Why study Ephesus?
God's Word
Reveals God's Truth
Anticipating our needs
Like Tomorrow's News Reports.

They lived in the shadow of the Largest Building in the Ancient World.

WELCOME TO THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS:

If you were arriving in Ephesus this evening, there is only one sight that would catch your eyes. Not the bustling harbor teeming with boats, not the roads lined with the exotic spices and goods from the east. No it would be the lustrous golden gleam of the Temple of Diana. The largest building ever built in the ancient world, the size of a city block, 10 stories high and covered with gold...

EPHEBUS was FAMOUS for its BEAUTY: The Seventh Wonder of the World was at Ephesus: The Temple The temple of Artemis itself had been rebuilt after a great fire in 356 BC, and ranked as one of the seven wonders of the world until its destruction by the Goths in AD 263. After years of patient search J. T. Wood in 1870 uncovered its remains in the marsh at the foot of Mt. Ayasoluk. It had been the largest building in the Greek world. The temple of Diana was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens. It was 425 feet long, 225 feet wide, with a forest of about 130, 30,000 pound, 60 foot high columns, all being gifts from kings of the ancient world. Each column around the altar to Artemis (Diana Romans), had life size figures all covered with pure gold.

EPHEBUS was FAMOUS for its RELIGION: It contained an image of the goddess which, it was claimed, had fallen from heaven (*cf.* Acts 19:35). Indeed, it may well have been a meteorite originally. Silver coins from many places show

the validity of the claim that the goddess of Ephesus was revered all over the world (Acts 19:27). They bear the inscription *Diana Ephesia* (cf. Acts 19:34).

EPHESUS was FAMOUS for its POSITION: Ephesus was second among the cities of the Empire. Only Rome exceeded her in wealth and power. The church in Ephesus is addressed first of the seven (Rev. 2:1-7), as being the most important church in the *de facto* capital, and as being the landing-place for a messenger from Patmos and standing at the head of a circular road joining the seven cities in order.

But in the midst of all that --

Point #1: CHRIST was SHINING IN HIS Church at EPHESUS: 2:1a **"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,**

THEY HAD POWERFUL FOUNDING: They were heirs to the greatest days of Paul's earthly ministry and the longest. Acts 19:11 describes extraordinary miraculous events. Verse 19 reports amazing conversions and life transformations.

THEY HAD GODLY NURTURING: Paul sent Timothy who stayed until church history records a mob killed him for his strong preaching against sin. John the Apostle lived there until his exile in Patmos. And then returned from Patmos to continue in ministry there.

THEY HAD TREMENDOUS HISTORY: Mary the mother of our Lord lived and died there and John the apostle gives this city an honor no other knew-- Ephesians was the only church that had 2 apostles write them inspired letters. A generation from it's founding Ephesians was mature. Two generations from Pentecost, the church at Ephesus had some of the richest history.

POINT #2: EPHESUS WAS AN ASSEMBLY THAT PLEASED GOD 2:1-3, 6: **'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 6 "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate**

One structure dominated Ephesus. One location flavored the entire life of the city. The magnificent palace to gross immorality was the temple of Diana.

THERE WAS IN EPHESUS: STRONG IMMORALITY. **YOU CAN STAY PURE FOR CHRIST IN ANY CULTURE, ANY TIME, ANY SETTING.** All day long in the confines of this glittering structure, thousands of prostitutes, male and female, gave themselves in the sordid worship of the pagan fertility deities. At dusk, they would go into the city to earn a living in the bustling atmosphere of travelers from both land and sea. We can learn the secret of how to resist an impure world and stay pure and holy for Jesus. Here is what Paul taught them 40 years earlier. You can stay pure by --

- **REPENTING OF YOUR PAST:** Ephesians 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
- **SEEING YOUR CALLING:** Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
- **LEARNING THE SPIRITUAL SECRET OF PUTTING OFF AND PUTTING ON:** Ephesians 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts
- **SEEKING CHRIST TO DEEPLY PENETRATE YOUR LIFE:** Ephesians 5:3-5 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.
- **RENOUNCING ALL TOUCH WITH YOUR OLD WAYS:** Ephesians 5:12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. (KJV)

THERE WAS IN EPHESUS: STRONG EVIL INFLUENCES. **YOU CAN STAY TRUE TO CHRIST IN ANY CULTURE, ANY TIME, ANY SETTING.**

Because this Temple was the most revered site in the ancient world to literally millions of worshipers, a custom had arisen that anyone was free within a 200-yard security zone. Thus, criminals came from far and wide to find a haven. And, their presence only permeated the city with evil. So how did Paul train them to stay good in that evil setting?

- **COMMIT TO TRUTHFULNESS:** Ephesians 4:25-32 wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.
- **FLEE ANYTHING THAT GRIEVES GOD:** Ephesians 4:26 be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with [his] hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the

hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (KJV)

THERE WAS IN EPHESUS: STRONG MATERIALISM. YOU CAN LIVE FOR CHRIST IN ANY CULTURE, ANY TIME, ANY SETTING.

Because of the nearly universal worship of Diana, no one would dare to rob her, thus behind the altar was a world bank, for the safe keeping of currency and treasures.

- **KNOW YOU GOT IT.** Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:
- **KNOW YOU ARE SECURE.** Ephesians 1:14 which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.
- **KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE.** Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
- **KNOW YOU GOT MORE THAN CAN BE COUNTED.** Ephesians 2:7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in [his] kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
- **KNOW YOU GOT MORE THAN YOU CAN DREAM OF.** Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (KJV)