

EPHESIANS

A Letter for The One Holy Church

Last Week: Acts helped us orient ourselves

This Week: Let's meet the Ephesians

Next Week: Ephesians 1:1-14 God's Chosen Family: Election and Unity in Christ

The City of Ephesus- a brief history and geography

Founded around 1400 BC, legendarily by the Amazons, though the Greeks attributed their founding to the hero *Androcolus*. There are well-preserved ruins in modern day Selçuk of Turkey.

Alexander the Great took control of the city in 334 BC and his successor Lysimachus built a 6-mile wall around it, as well as restoring the Temple of Artemis. Later in the Hellenistic period a stadium that seated 25,000 people was built (saw it last week in Acts 19).

133 BC it was bequeathed to the Romans and declared the Capital of the Province of Asia

Accessible by a river leading out to sea as well as a major trans-Anatolian highway leading East, a first century AD Jewish historian/geographer said, "The city because of its advantageous situation in other respects [than the harbor], grows daily and is the largest market (*emporium*) in Asia on this side of the Taurus." Paul often chose these types of vibrant cities (economically and intellectually) as his mission centers.

Ephesus suffered destruction by a great earthquake in AD 60, shortly after Paul's epistle, but was rebuilt opulently with many great and famous additions for centuries to come.

The Religious Scene

As diverse as any ancient city:

Judaism

Polytheism

The Temple of Artemis Ephesia

Cultic Worship of Artemis Ephesia

-Spring festival

-Twice weekly processions

-Probably more like Cybele than Greek goddess Artemis

- *Ephesian* Artemis depicted as many-breasted

- A standard feature of ancient paganism was temple prostitution, priestesses were a means of achieving:

1.

2.

3.

- Had satellite worship sites all over Asia Minor

- Thought to be the most powerful of the gods and could be appealed to in any need
 - + her cult is Paul's target when he emphasizes Christ's power and supremacy in *Ephesians*
 - + signs of the zodiac around her neck – yet Christ is God over the Cosmos
 - + variety of animals around her skirt, yet Christ is preeminent over all Creation

-Magic in the Cult of Artemis Ephesia

- Pliny records an image of Hekate (goddess of underworld) behind sanctuary of Artemis
- another at crossroads of town – goddess of witchcraft and sorcery
- Artemis Ephesia was also called upon by practitioners of magic
- the silversmiths we met last week would make these coins/images with her lettering
 - +six secret, ancient, untranslatable words, well-attested in magic spells of the time
 - +thought to have the power to ward off demons (compare with Paul in Eph 6)
 - +written on jewelry or spoken as incantations
- though common in the ancient world, Ephesus had a ***reputation*** for this

Paul clashed with them in Acts 19:11-20 and this gives good light to Paul's claim that Christ has been lifted "*far above every ruler and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named.*" (Eph. 1:21)

1 Cor 15:32- wild beasts at Ephesus may be a reference to these demonic forces and magical arts

The Word of the Lord GROWS the Church in Ephesus

The Church grows even amid Conflicts

- conflicts with the Jews (Acts 19:8-10)
- conflicts with Jewish Exorcists and Pagan Magicians (Acts 19:11-20)
- conflicts with the cult of Artemis Ephesia (Acts 19:21-41)

Winger "Ephesians bears the imprint of the Gospel's battle with this pagan goddess and her cult, particularly in chapter 5, which calls Christians away from fellowship with such darkness and toward the true worship of God through Christ in the Spirit. But those passages that proclaim the elevation of Christ above every power and name that is named (1:19-23; 2:1-2, 6; 3:8-10; 6:10-17) apply equally to his elevation over her."

What happened in Ephesus after Paul left?

"The possibility that the church at Ephesus had been divided by doctrinal strife, some pastors removed from office, and new pastors ordained by the hand of Timothy explains the urgency...not only does this sermon in Acts 20:28-35 reflect the situation of 1 Timothy, but it also explains the emphasis on the office of the ministry as a gift of the ascended Christ to the church in Eph 4:7-16. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul encourages them to treasure their new pastors and rely upon them to reestablish unity through one Baptism and the truth of the Gospel (4:1-16)."

Ephesus beyond Acts/Epistles

One of the Seven churches in Revelation (2:1-7)

Tradition that John the Evangelist served there as Bishop while carrying for Mary the mother of Jesus

Early church Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians (2nd century)