

## CHAPTER TWO

### LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

The letter to Ephesus: Revelation 2:1 - 7

The city: Ephesus was the first and greatest city of Asia.

1. At the time of John's writing, Ephesus was the site of the greatest harbor in Asia and, as a result, the city was one of the most wealthy. William Ramsay said Ephesus was "the vanity fair of the ancient world."
2. Politically, the city was free.
3. Religiously, Ephesus was the center of Artemis (Diana) worship. The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world. The sanctuary of Diana was 377' long, 180' in width, and 60' in height. It was marked by one hundred-seventeen marble pillars (60' in height), thirty-six of which were overlaid with gold. "These columns were six feet in diameter and 36 of them were sculptured at the base with life-size figures. The temple stood on a platform 239 feet wide by 418 feet long. The holy of holies was apparently open to the sky and contained an altar twenty feet square, behind which the statue of Artemis no doubt stood. Artemis or Diana was equated with the Asia Minor Cybele, the mother goddess. As worshipped in Ephesus the goddess was a considerably orientalized fertility deity. Her statue was a many-breasted figure (or as some think fronted with ostrich eggs, symbolizing fertility). During the Artemision (March and April), a month dedicated to the worship of the goddess, devotees came from many other provinces to participate in the religious festivals" (The Biblical World, p. 229).

The temple "was considered so sacred and inviolable that not only the Ephesians, but also foreign individuals, kings, and peoples deposited money there for safekeeping. So the temple was a sort of bank. In addition, great gifts were made to the goddess, which added to the wealth of her temple. One inscription tells of the gift of a certain Vibrius Salutaris of twenty-nine statues of silver and gold, to be carried in a public procession to the temple. In the light of all this we begin to appreciate the concern of 'Demetrius, a silversmith, which made shrines for Diana' - Acts 19:24" (The Bible And Archaeology, p. 400). "In A.D. 262 the Goths destroyed the temple and the entire city of Ephesus. The city never regained its glory or its 'first love.' A group of Christian bishops held a council in Ephesus as late as A.D. 431, but Ephesus was later attacked by the Arabs, Turks and finally the Mongols in 1403. Today the city's seaport is a marsh covered with reeds and the city itself is desolate" (The Bible Almanac, p. 540).

The church: (cf. Acts 19 - 20)

1. Acts 19:1 - 7 - Paul arrived in Ephesus and found some disciples who had been baptized with the baptism of John.
2. Acts 19:8 - 9 - Paul entered the synagogue and reasoned and persuaded people concerning the kingdom and continued this practice for a period of three months.
3. Acts 19:9 - 10 - Due to opposition from the Jews Paul went to the Gentile school of Tyrannus and continued his teaching there for two years.
4. Acts 19:11 - 16 - Opposition from Jewish exorcists surfaced.
5. Acts 19:17 - 20 - The church had a tremendous beginning.

1 - "The one who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the one who walks among the seven lampstands" - by what we have already determined to be the thrust of this symbol, this may be indication of His inspecting the church with respect to its identity.

2 - 3 - The commendation: "I know your:

a. deeds

b. toil

c. perseverance

d. you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false."

e. From verse 6 - "This you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate."

4 - The criticism: "You have forsaken your first love."

5 - 6 - The correction:

a. "remember

b. repent

c. do the deeds you did at first"

7 - The caution: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Everyone capable of hearing is addressed.

The contribution: "I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." The cost of conquest is continuing struggle.