

Revelation 2.1-7

(Motive Matters)

2 – 16 - 2020

BACKGROUND

THE CITY OF EPHEBUS

1. The Glory of Ephesus

- Ephesus was the defacto capital of the province, known as “Supreme Metropolis of Asia”.
- Ephesus was the fourth most important city in the Roman empire, behind Rome, Alexandria and Antioch of Syria.
- Ephesus derived its greatness from two sources, commercial trade and religion. It was known as both a religious and commercial center.
- Ephesus was home to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – the temple of the goddess Artemis (Greek), also called Diana (Roman). (cf. Ac. 19:23-41)

2. The Evil of Ephesus

- Thousands of priests and priestesses were involved in her service. Many of the priestesses were dedicated to cult prostitution.
- “To what extent the temple phenomena contributed to the general moral deterioration of the population cannot be assessed, but one of Ephesus’ own citizens, the weeping philosopher Heraclitus, said that the inhabitants of the city were “fit only to be drowned and that the reason why he could never laugh or smile was because he lived amidst such terrible uncleanness.” (Johnson, 433)
- In addition to the worship of Artemis, Ephesus was devoted to emperor worship, which thrived during the reign of Domitian.

THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS

1. **Approximate Timeline:** Acts 19 (52-55); Acts 20 (56/57); Ephesians (60-61); 1 Timothy (65)
2. **Early Spiritual Character:** Quick to accept truth (Ac. 19:1-7); devoted to growth and learning (Ac. 19:9-10); zealous for good works and sincere in repentance (Ac. 19:17-20).
3. **Further Spiritual Character:** When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he considered them faithful in Christ Jesus (Ep. 1:1); Paul had also heard of their “faith in the Lord Jesus” and their “love for all the saints” (Ep. 1:15-16).
4. **A Church Grounded in Truth and Knowledge:**
 - The first disciples at Ephesus spent everyday in the school of Tyrannus with Paul hearing and teaching God’s word for two years. (Ac. 19:9-10)
 - Paul taught the brethren so thoroughly that he could testify, “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose [counsel] of God. (Ac. 20:26-27)
5. **Paul’s Concern for the Future:**
 - Paul met briefly with the Ephesian elders in Miletus at the end of his third missionary journey, while he traveled to Jerusalem. He met with them to warn of wolves (i.e. false teachers) that would “come in among them not sparing the flock.” These wolves would come from outside and inside the body. (Ac. 20:25-30).
 - It is for this reason that Paul left Timothy in Ephesus; to instruct their hearts to avoid false and divisive discussion and to help fend off the wolves from the inside and outside.

“THE ONE WHO HOLDS” AND “WALKS”

“WHO HOLDS THE SEVEN STARS IN HIS RIGHT HAND”

1. “Holds”, indicates authority. They are under His power. He controls their destiny (cf. 2:5).
2. “Holds”, also indicates protection and care.

“WHO WALKS AMONG THE SEVEN GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS”

1. “Walks”, indicates presence. The Lord is with them. He is examining and inspecting their activities.

“I KNOW”

“YOUR DEEDS AND YOUR TOIL AND PERSEVERANCE”

1. **“I know”** appears in each of the seven letters and reminds the churches that the Lord has an accurate understanding of what is going on there.
2. **“Deeds”** indicates hard work for the Lord as a full time job.
3. **“Toil”** indicates toiling in spite of great difficulty to the point of exhaustion. “These brethren were willing to sweat.” (Erhardt, 25)
4. **“Perseverance”** indicates patient endurance and continuing despite hardship.

“YOU CANNOT TOLERATE EVIL MEN”

1. You could say they were “intolerant” (though not in the way that word is thrown around today). They won’t put up with evil in their midst.
2. “Deeds”

“YOU PUT TO THE TEST” (1 TIM. 1:3 – 7; 4:1 – 3; 1 JOHN 4:1) “TEST THE SPIRITS”

“YOU HAVE PERSEVERANCE”

1. “They toiled to the point of weariness without wearying of their toil! They had not allowed discouragement to slow them down. (Erhardt, 26)
2. “they persevered under tests and trials, remained steadfast under the strain and stress of labor for the Lord, and were unwavering in their vigorous opposition to false teachers.” (Hailey, 121)

“I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU”

“YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE”

1. All the good they are doing, and the hardship they are enduring is worthless without love (cf. 1 Co. 13:1-3).
2. **“First love”**
 - Could be love for God or love for others.
 - The context doesn’t clearly demand or distinguish which object of love they have left.
 - It is important to note that Scripture does not separate the two – they stand and fall together. I cannot love God without loving brethren. I cannot truly love brethren without a love for God.
 - It is also important to note they still “loved”; it is only their “first love” which they “left.” They certainly loved good works. They certainly loved truth...
 - Had they forgotten God in the midst of their great defense of truth? Has truth and/or good works become an idol supplanting their devotion to God and Christ? (cf. Mt. 6:24, 33)
 - Or had they forgotten the goal of instruction (1 Ti. 1:5) and forgotten to love each other through hardship? (cf. Ep. 1:15-16)

“THEREFORE” WHAT YOU MUST DO

“REMEMBER”

1. Remember indicates continued remembrance. The idea is “keep on remembering” or “hold in memory.”
2. “Nostalgia” in this case is positive and productive.
3. “Memory can be a great motivator. The prodigal son would not have returned home if it were not for his memory (Lk. 15:17).” (Erhardt, 27)

“REPENT”

“An urgent appeal for an instant change of mind and conduct while there is still time.” (Jenkins)

“DO” RETURN TO RIGHT MOTIVE COUPLED WITH RIGHT ACTION (1 TIM. 1:3-5)

“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”