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5-2-2024

## THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Revelation 2:1-7 addresses the spiritual condition of the church at Ephesus in Asia Minor (today's Turkey). Much good is said about it, but most of us focus on the one and only criticism of it and that is that they had lost their first love. Let us look more closely at this church and its city.

Ephesus was a major commerce center in Roman times. It also featured an elaborate pagan temple to the goddess Diana, or Artemis, who, according to their belief, came down from Jupiter. People came from all over to that temple. Silversmiths made a fortune selling images of Diana.

Paul established the church there during his third missionary journey, which was probably somewhere around 54-59 A.D. There was a great ministry developed in Ephesus that saw many miracles, signs, and wonders. It was so great that people from all over Asia Minor went to Ephesus to hear the gospel. Paul spent three years there. Upon leaving, he appointed Aquila and Priscilla to lead the church. It had perhaps the greatest impact of any church that Paul established.

Now, let us move ahead about forty years to 95-96 A.D. when John wrote the book of Revelation. The church at Ephesus had "cooled off" from its fervor for the gospel, known as their first love. This is a natural human tendency as people become so accustomed to things and become comfortable or complacent resulting in the loss of their first love or zeal for God. This greatly displeased Jesus but his love for them was as strong as ever. Without repentance and revival, Jesus said they would lose their place, i.e., their candlestick would be removed. Their candlestick likely meant their pastoral (or apostolic) leadership.

In spite of this, they still had a lot going on in works for which Jesus praised them. He complemented them on their works, (vs. 2) their labors for the gospel, their intolerance of evil, and their rejection of false apostles. They had patiently over time borne the witness of Jesus' name without wavering. They also opposed the deeds of a fringe group of Nicolaitans, whom Jesus hated.

This admonition to return to their "first love" still applies today for both the present-day church and also for you and me individually. We must not let time cause us to become too comfortable or lackadaisical in our relationship with the Lord. Let us consciously draw closer to him every day.

No amount of good works, although they are important, can be a substitute for our time spent with God, our first love.