

I. A GLIMPSE INTO 1ST CENTURY EPHEBUS

A. Commercial Significance

1. Major port city with a population of about 300,000

B. Cultic Significance

1. Center of mother goddess worship in Asia
2. Temple of Diana (Roman) or Artemis (Greek), one of Seven Wonders of the Ancient World
3. Black meteorite came out of heaven and they believed it was the goddess Diana (cf. Acts 19:35)

C. Cultural Significance

1. 4th greatest ancient city after Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch
2. Cultural Center of Asia
3. Great Theatre seating 24,000 (cf. Acts 19:29)

D. Ecclesiological Significance

1. Missions movement throughout Asia and Paul's final thrust towards Jerusalem catalyzed out of Ephesus
2. John the apostle came to Ephesus after Paul along with Jesus' mother Mary

II. REVELATION OF JESUS

A. *The One who holds the seven stars in His hands* - God's sovereignty

B. *The One who walks among the seven golden lampstands* - God's active evaluation of the Church

III. AFFIRMATION OF JESUS

A. Orthopraxis – Truth of Works and Practice, Perseverance

1. Summary of Acts 18-20
2. School of Tyrannus – Revival and Missions
3. Acts 19:23 – Perseverance under Fire
4. Other Hardships - 1 Cor. 15, 1 Cor.16, 2 Cor. 1, 2 Tim. 1

B. Orthodoxy – Truth of Thoughts and Beliefs

1. Evil men, false apostles, Nicolaitans
2. Acts 18 – A foundation of the Spirit

3. Acts 20 – Elders, the Gatekeepers of the Flock
4. 1 Timothy 1 – Sound Doctrine

IV. ADMONISHMENT FROM JESUS

A. Orthokardia – Truth of Heart

1. *But I have this against you, that you have left your first love*
2. Matthew 7 – you can do right works without truth of heart (1 Cor. 13)
3. Luke 7:47 – The Key to Love
4. Acts 20:19 – Apostolic Model of Sincerity (2 Cor. 1:12, 1 Tim. 1:5)

B. Remember, repent, resume

1. *Remember from where you have fallen...*
2. *Repent...*
3. *Do the deeds you did at first...*

V. FUTURE REPERCUSSIONS

A. Negative – *or else I am coming to you and will removal your lampstand out of its place- unless you repent*

1. Jesus is in the business of closing churches just as He is in the business of starting them.

B. Positive – *to him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God*

1. Eternal reward anchored in the Age to Come (Gen. 3:24, Rev. 22)
2. Inheriting the Kingdom of God is a narrow path (Phil. 2:12, 1 Thes. 2:12)
3. Luke 17:32-33 – Remember Lot's wife

VI. A GLIMPSE INTO 1ST CENTURY SMYRNA

A. Commercial Significance

1. A rival port city to Asia
2. Commerce tied to cultic and religious trade guilds

B. Hedonistic Significance

1. Affluent and beautiful city known as the “glory of Asia”
2. Commerce tied to hedonistic idolatry, drunkenness and orgies

C. Cultic Significance

1. Early adopters of emperor worship

D. Ecclesiological Significance

1. Of the 7 Churches in Revelation, only the Smyranean church stands today (Izmir, Turkey)
2. Early Church Father Polycarp was known as the Bishop of Smyrna before his martyrdom in 155 AD.

VII. REVELATION OF JESUS

A. *The first and the last* – The Eternality of Jesus

B. *Who was dead and has come to life* – The Promise of Resurrection in Jesus

³² If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. ³³ Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” ³⁴ Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame. (NASB 1 Corinthians 15:32-34)

VIII. AFFIRMATION OF JESUS

A. Tribulation

B. Poverty

IX. ADMONISHMENT OF JESUS

A. To the Church undergoing tribulation Jesus withholds the admonishment and instead prepares them for further tribulation to come.

²³ except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. (NASB Acts 20:23-24)

B. Satan is mentioned in verse 9 as the one leading Jews into blasphemy. The devil is then mentioned in verse 10 as the one who will cast some of the Smyrneans into prison.

C. We can rest our hearts in the sovereignty of God, knowing that God wields Satan as an instrument of testing. Satan may believe he is working autonomously but there are divine boundaries set by God. Jesus states that the context of this particular tribulation and imprisonment is for testing.

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ...(NASB 1 Peter 1:6-7)

D. *Be faithful unto death* – faithful to the point of death.

1. Hebrews 11

⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰ After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. ¹¹ To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NASB 1 Peter 5:8-11)

X. FUTURE REPERCUSSION

A. Positive – *Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life*

B. Positive – *He who overcomes will not be hurt by second death*

1. “You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will.” (St. Polycarp of Smyrna, Bishop and Martyr; The Martyrdom of Polycarp, Chapter XI)

⁵ But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NASB 2 Timothy 2:5-8)