

## **Ephesus and Paul's Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 18-19; Revelation 2)**

- One of the five major cities in the Roman Empire at that time. It was the capital of the Roman province of Asia.
- It's in modern day Turkey.
- It was a major port on the Aegean Sea.
- A hub of sea and land transportation because it was on the main route from Rome to the east.
- A very wealthy city due to trade occurring because of the port.
- A very important city in the Roman Empire politically, commercially, and financially.
- One of the biggest draws was the temple of Artemis, a goddess of fertility. Her grand temple was one mile outside of the city and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. See Acts 19 for the story of the silversmith Demetrius who made silver idols for the Artemis temple worship.
- There was an annual festival every spring where Artemis worshippers came from all over the world to honor her. The festival included wild orgies.
- Ephesus had many temples for other Roman gods.
- Ephesus was also a center for black magic, occult practices, superstitions, sorcery, witchcraft, and incantations. This was not just among the Gentiles but had also influenced the Jews. The Jews had extensive ceremonies and spoken and written formulas to fight against evil spirits.
- There was a synagogue in Ephesus.
- In about AD 53, Paul took Priscilla and Aquilla (a married couple, and fellow tent makers) to Ephesus on his second missionary trip. While there, he debates with Jews in the synagogue and they ask him to stay. He declines and says he will come back later "God willing." He leaves Priscilla and Aquilla in Ephesus.
- A year later, Paul does return on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary trip and this time he stays in Ephesus for 2-3 years. He leaves Timothy there to pastor the thriving church.
- A couple of years later he is arrested for teaching the gospel in Rome. This is one of the prison epistles. Paul sends this letter back to his former church in Ephesus with Tychicus.
- The letter was intended to be circulated among other churches in Asia Minor. It is a general letter not addressing false teaching or any particular heresy or any particular problem in the church.
- In Revelation the church at Ephesus is commended for her toil and perseverance and intolerance of evil men and her testing of false teaching, but she is rebuked for having left their first love Jesus.