

REVELATION OF JOHN (Chapter 2, v 3 – 6: You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans*, which I hate)

Presenting the first city – the church in Ephesus “

Resources: Chronological Study Bible

Abarim Publications (Library of Congress

Wikopedia / Got Questions

History of Ephesus (overview only)

Founded in approximately 10th century BCE (probably near ruins of an old settlement. Legend has it that it was founded by Amazons. It was inhabited from end of Bronze Age onwards, location changing due to floods & whims of various rulers.

Greek EPHASUS: Seventh century BCE under rule of Lydian kings (see attached). It was one of the wealthiest cities in the Mediterranean world, birthplace and home of Heraclitus (philosopher before Socrates). Women enjoyed right and there are records of female artists, sculptors, painters & teachers. Night light for streets via oil lamps – a luxury. Construction under King Croesus of the Temple of Artemis under King Croesus of Lydia (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) (destroyed 356 BCE by fire (rebuilt 2 x thereafter)

Cyrus of Persia brought entire area under Persian Rule – remained so as Ephesus remained neutral and did not rebel with Ionian City States – Ephesus stayed under Cyrus’ protection

HELENISTIC EPHASUS: Under Persian rule until Alexander the Great liberated it 334 BCE. Alexander offered to rebuild temple of Artemis – Ephesians refused saying ‘unseemly for one god to build a temple for another (maybe tongue in cheek?) After Alexander, Lysimachus, one of his generals, began renewal project, constructing a new harbor with defensive walls. However, this would move the city about 2 miles southwest. Ephesians refused to move – Lysimachus blocked the city’s sewage system, forcing them to out.

ROMAN EPHASUS: 129 BCE – Heavy taxes imposed – there was a rebellion of Mithridates 88 BCE – a massacre of all Latin speaking inhabitants under Sulla. The city was damaged by an earthquake in 17 CE. Afterward, Ephesus became a very important center of trade & commerce. The historian, Aristo, described Ephesus as the most important trading center in Asia. It remained a leading political & intellectual center, boasting the Celsus Library and second school of philosophy in the Aegean.

From the first century (CE) onwards, Ephesus visited by early Christians (most notably St. Paul) – it’s said that Mary, mother of Jesus, retired there.

DECLINE: After Christianity became the dominant religion, Ephesus declined in cultural and intellectual pursuits. Emperor Theodosius had all temples closed and reduced women to 2nd class citizens – the worship of mother goddess Artemis was forbidden and the temple of Artemis destroyed by a Christian mob with the ruins used as a quarry for building materials for other local projects (such as churches). The streets, once adorned with statuary, highly maintained and lighted by oil lamps at night, fell into decay and darkness as the attention of the now-Christian citizens of Ephesus was directed to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION: The city of Ephesus went through rebuilding over many years, under many rulers and it flourished. When Christianity became dominant it went into decline, including delegating women to 2nd class citizenship. The conclusion I reach is that John is telling Ephesus that just being Christians isn't enough – they are to work, grow, love, share. I'm of the mind that he goes even further in chastising them for wanton destruction of other cultures and faiths. In other words, just sitting around and waiting for Christ's second coming was not cutting it!

*Nicolaitans – somewhat unclear but Bible commentators believe they were a heretical sect who followed the teachings of Nicolas, who was possibly one of the deacons of the early church mentioned in Acts 6:5. Possibly a heretical sect sacrificing to idols and living life of self-indulgence See attachment