

## ] The Saint and the Ain't [

Ephesians 1:1-2

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~ The oriental Asian city of Ephesus was founded in around two thousand B.C. by the Hittites; and it remained under their control until around one thousand B.C. when the Greeks came in. Kipling was exactly wrong concerning Ephesus when he said, “... *east is east and west is west, and never the two shall meet.*” East and west definitely met in the city of Ephesus. For at least twenty-five hundred years, Ephesus was one of the great and powerful cities of the world. Today, the city proper is about six miles inland; but in the day in which we are studying, it was directly on the coast. The harbor has been completely silted in today; but when Paul visited Ephesus, he sailed right up to the docks connected to marble streets. Beautiful white, fine-grain, and perfectly flawless Parian marble was everywhere. The culture, art and wealth of the Ephesian citizens culminated into the building of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the temple of Diana.

The temple of Diana was certainly one of the most beautiful works of architecture ever accomplished; and it was the largest Greek temple ever constructed. It was four times larger than the Parthenon; and very similar to it. It was four hundred eighteen feet long, by two hundred thirty-nine feet wide. The one hundred exterior columns were a wonder of technology; and inside, some of the most spectacular artwork ever created was on display — including Apelles magnificent portrait of Alexander the Great. Also on display was the vulgar idol of Diana – not the beautiful goddess of the moon Diana of Greek mythology – no, this was the Anatolian conception of her as the goddess of fertility – the “*many breasted*” one. All sorts of gross immorality took place in the shadow of this temple.

That’s what the apostle Paul and the party that accompanied him had to contend with. Even so, the Gospel of the Living and True God — the Lord Jesus Christ — was preached with such power that a riot ensued; because Paul was putting the idol makers out of business. Paul was teaching eternal

life through Christ; which turns people from idolatry. I believe the preaching of the Gospel was more effective at this time than it ever has been at any other time in history — or in any other part of the world. That's the time and condition under which the Ephesian church came into existence. The church at Ephesus was the highest church, spiritually speaking; higher than any other church at any other time. It was believer's living in a pagan city who understood this epistle completely.

Of the seven churches in Asia, mentioned in Revelation, the first one called-out is Ephesus. You and I cannot even conceive the dreadfully high spiritual level the Spirit of God endowed upon the church at Ephesus. These people loved the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, friends. They were drawn to Him. I love the church today — I love my own church very, very much — but, quite frankly, the modern church is far from presenting sound doctrine. *ALL* of them. Christians today are enamored with a program, with music, with doing church work, and with holding some type of office in the church — and that's all okay — but neglecting Bible study renders us unable to stay close to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ — and that's *not* okay; because, without a personal relationship with Him, all of those other things are meaningless. Be honest with yourself, friends: how much do you really love Jesus?

Well, Christ loved the church, and He gave His life for us. Do you return that love by responding to, and trusting and obeying His precepts? Can you honestly say you love God because He first loved you? Can you truthfully say you keep His commandments just because you love Christ Jesus? This study through the epistle to the Ephesians ought to bring us very close to Christ. In fact, it will bring the true saint closer to Jesus than ever; and it will wholly alienate any and all make-believers. Of course, the church in the world today is a body of believers — the body of Christ. We have redemption through His Blood. By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. So, let's all pray for knowledge and wisdom; and ask the Lord to make these things real to our hearts and minds as we begin this most excellent epistle in our Spiritual Safari....

***1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:***

***2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.***

~ The inscription “....which are at Ephesus” – en Epheso – in verse one is omitted from the better manuscripts. It is thought that the Epistle to the Ephesians was a *circular* letter, which included other churches as well as the church at Ephesus, and thereby explains the insertion of its name in some manuscripts, whereas, others omit it. It is likewise believed that this epistle is the one to the Laodiceans Paul referred to in Colossians chapter four verse sixteen. This could also likely correspond to the last of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation chapter two and three, rather than to the first church; however, the contents of the Ephesian letter correspond more to the condition of the Ephesian church than to those in Laodicea.

Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus; Christ is His title in deity – the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus was His human Name, but Paul didn’t know the Jesus of His three year earthly ministry. Paul met Jesus on the Damascus road much later, when Jesus was already the glorified Christ. That’s how Paul knew Christ Jesus: Christ first. An apostle is the highest office the church has ever had. No one in the modern-day church meets the criteria for being designated an apostle. To begin with, the apostles received their commission directly from the lips of the Living Jesus. Dr. Luke confirmed this in Acts; and testifies Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. That’s another reason I believe Paul took the place of Judas – not Mattathias. Luke wrote Acts, friends — not Paul. Simon Peter held a lottery to vote Mattathias in; but I can’t seem to locate where Jesus made Mattathias an apostle, according to any record or account. So, *ALL* of the apostles were called, chosen, and commissioned directly by Christ Himself — including Paul.

Further, an apostle must have physically seen the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior after His resurrection. Paul certainly met that requirement, according to the Word of God, as presented by Luke. An apostle must

exercise a special and ordained inspiration of expounding and writing Scripture; and without ALL of those prerequisites, my friends – you are no apostle. Also, an apostle must exercise supreme authority. Jesus said to them, *“all power is given unto you.”* The badge of their authority was the power of sign gifts in their day. The sign gifts ceased with the apostles. They had those gifts as credibility because they didn’t have a New Testament Bible to give them that credibility; and we don’t need that today – the Bible is our credibility.

During John’s long ministry he said, *“.... if any come to you not having this doctrine receive them not.”* They were no longer exercising sign gifts – it was all about sound doctrine by the close of the first century A.D. – and that’s what is important today. Moreover, an apostle was given a universal commission to found churches. Those are the six requirements any *“apostle”* must meet to be called an apostle; and Paul met all six. See, Paul says he was, *“....an apostle by the will of God.”* He didn’t have any personal ambitions; and he didn’t rest on the ordination of men, or whether or not the church considered or accepted him as an apostle – simply *by the will of God* – was his credentials. That’s the type of apostle Paul was; but he also met the necessary requirements, too. You don’t – and I don’t, either.

Now, a *“saint”* – a believer – is someone set aside for the sole use of the Lord God Almighty. That’s a person who belongs to God. The most willing of servants are those who pray for God to provide so they do not have to continue to walk with one foot in the world as they further the cause of Christ. Remember, even the basic pots and pans in the wilderness tabernacle service God labeled *“holy vessels.”* That doesn’t mean they were beautiful masterpieces of art, though – because they were scratched, beaten and battered from a seemingly endless wilderness march – but they were for the sole use of the work of the Lord. A saint is a person who has trusted Christ with their lives. Period.

There are only two kinds of people today: a saint, and an ain’t! Tragically, though, there are multitudes of saints – genuine believers – who have been set aside, and God no longer uses them; and that should be frightening to all of us. However, that’s not God’s fault – it’s *their* fault. They either

continue in gross sin, immorality, and willful disobedience, or they just wander away and neglect the work of God. It's typically the latter because of the former! Saints should act saintly, to be sure; but, we aren't saints because of the way we act – we're saints because of our position in Christ; and we belong to Him, either way.

There is wild and weird theology from so-called contemporary theologians who attempt to define salvation as “*redemption*,” “*atonement*,” “*justification*,” “*reconciliation*,” “*propitiation*,” and, as the “*vicarious substitutionary sacrifice of Christ*.” Well, all of those are correct; but, each presents only *ONE* aspect of a multi-faceted definition of salvation. Without a full-orbed view, your doctrine cannot be sound doctrine; because it will insist on neglecting other doctrine. To be saved means we are *IN* Christ and Christ is *IN* us! We are irrevocably and organically joined to Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That's the only way anyone ever gets into the body of believers. Whosoever is joined to the Lord Jesus this way is of one spirit. Let's remember to practice that in love.

There is no condemnation for those who are *IN* Christ! Being *IN* Christ Jesus cannot be improved on, either, friends. That's the single great accomplishment of our salvation. This phrase occurs one hundred thirty times in the New Testament. Jesus said, “.... *ye IN Me and I IN you*.” Now, a bird is in the air, but the air is also in the bird. The fish is in the water, but the water is also in the fish. That I can understand. However, what Jesus said, I can't explain that. Don't tell anyone; because my Biblical ignorance is a well-kept secret, I think. Anyways, as our Spiritual Safari continues on from here, may His grace and peace be with all of you dear readers today — and forevermore ~

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