

# Introduction to 1 and 2 Timothy

## SETTING—EPHESUS AND ARTEMIS

Ephesus was in the Roman province of Asia. Once Paul and Timothy were forbidden to preach in the province of Asia by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6, c. A.D. 50), but eventually Ephesus became the home church for the Apostle Paul's mission for about three years (Acts 20:31, c. A.D. 54–56). During these years he experienced marvels through God's work and great suffering from persecution. He wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8).<sup>1</sup> The hardships in Asia were so great, Paul and Timothy despaired even of life, yet God delivered them (2 Cor 1:8–9). At Paul's final imprisonment in Rome almost all of his coworkers from Asia deserted him (2 Tim 1:15).

The city and the church had people of various ethnic groups. Paul had extended discussions about Jesus in the synagogue and in Tyrannus' School.<sup>2</sup> Paul had many coworkers, some Jewish, including the Romans Prisca and Aquila, his fellow tentmakers, learned Alexandrian Apollos, Lycaonian Timothy, Macedonian Aristarchus, and possibly Alexander. Paul also had friends and enemies among the Gentiles: the Asiarchs,<sup>3</sup> the town clerk, Demetrius, and other artisans.<sup>4</sup> Paul's traveling companions Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus were from Asia (Acts 20:4).

The disciples of John had no knowledge of the Spirit,<sup>5</sup> yet spiritually much happened. Although he knew only John's baptism, for example, Apollos was on fire with the Spirit. Great miracles occurred. Diseases were healed (Acts 19:11–12). Sins were confessed publicly (Acts 19:18).

1. Circa A.D. 56.

2. Acts 18:19, 26; 19:8–10; 20:21. See *New Docs.* 4, 1987: 231. A Jewish menorah is engraved in the steps of the second-century Celsus Library, as seen by the author, May 2010.

3. See Titus 3:1.

4. Acts 19:9, 24–25, 31, 35; 20:21.

5. Acts 18:25; 19:2. See Titus 3:13.

But where the Holy Spirit was present, so were evil spirits. These evil spirits were cast out by Paul, but they attacked the seven sons of the high priest Sceva (Acts 19:13–16). Seeking to defend the goddess Artemis, mobs attacked the Christians (Acts 19:23–41). The Holy Spirit opened a door despite many Gentile and Jewish adversaries.<sup>6</sup>

Many Jews were brought to Ephesus under Antiochus II and given citizenship.<sup>7</sup> They insisted on not worshiping the Gentile gods, being free to celebrate the Sabbath (not appearing in court), not being forced to participate in military service, and being able to send money to the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

According to Strabo, Ephesus was “the largest emporium in Asia this side the Taurus.”<sup>9</sup> Many inscriptions called Ephesus “the first and greatest metropolis of Asia.”<sup>10</sup> The city had around 200,000–250,000 inhabitants.<sup>11</sup> It was the seaway to Rome and gateway to Asia with its harbor and was connected to a major highway used by all who traveled towards the east.<sup>12</sup> Androclus, son of Codrus, King of Athens, who led an Ionian colonization to Ephesus, became its official founder, although ancients recognized others (Carians) were there earlier,<sup>13</sup> as, for example, Smyrna, an Amazon who took possession of Ephesus. Amazons are given credit for naming the city.<sup>14</sup> Lysimachus founded the later city of Ephesus.<sup>15</sup> When King Attalus Philometor died (133 B.C.), he left the Romans as his heirs, and they proclaimed the country a province, calling it Asia, the same name as the continent.<sup>16</sup>

6. 1 Cor 16:9; Acts 19:9; 20:19.

7. Antiochus II reigned 261–46 B.C. Josephus, *Ant.* 12.3 [125; 148–53]; Ramsay 1994: 103, 111; Strelan 1996: 193.

8. Josephus, *Ant.* 16.2 [27–28, 43–47, 60]; 14.10 [225–30, 262–64]; Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 78, 83.

9. Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.24 [C641].

10. Wood 1877: App. 3, No. 7; *New Docs* 4, 1987: 75.

11. Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 131; Trebilco 1994: 307.

12. Many years earlier, the Aegean Sea “used to wash up to the temple of Diana” but no longer (Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 2.87 [201]; Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.24; 14.2.29 [C641, 663]; Ramsay 1994: 165; Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 54–57).

13. Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.3 [C632–33]; Pausanias, *Descr.* 7.2.7–9; 3.1.

14. Strabo, *Geogr.* 11.5.4 [C505].

15. Pausanias, *Descr.* 1. 9. 6–7; 7.3.4.

16. Strabo, *Geogr.* 13.4.2 [C624].

At least as early as A.D. 400s, Bible scholars have been elaborating on the worship of Artemis as background for the New Testament letters.<sup>17</sup> Pausanias summarizes the ancient sentiment: “All cities worship Artemis of Ephesus, and individuals hold her in honour above all the gods. The reason, in my view, is the renown of the Amazons, who traditionally dedicated the image, also the extreme antiquity of this sanctuary. Three other points as well have contributed to her renown, the size of the temple, surpassing all buildings among men, the eminence of the city of the Ephesians and the renown of the goddess who dwells there.”<sup>18</sup> The temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. When Antipater saw the temple “that mounted to the clouds,” the other wonders lost their brilliancy for, “Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand!”<sup>19</sup>

Artemis, huntress, queen of beasts, is included in the battles between the gods by Homer (*Il.* 21 [535]). Euripides calls her “Maid of the mountain-wild.”<sup>20</sup> Ancient religions were syncretistic. Possibly the earliest temple at Ephesus was dedicated to Cybele and Demeter.<sup>21</sup> The queen bee was the original predominant model for the goddess. The Greek portrayal of the deities as anthropomorphic was combined with the earlier Anatolian more animalistic portrayals of deity.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Artemis at Ephesus has the face of a woman but her long tapered skirt resembles the tapered abdomen of the queen bee. The Ephesian Artemis’ chest is covered by her many eggs or ova.<sup>23</sup> The priestesses were called Melissae (“worker bees”) and priests were called Essenes (“drones”).<sup>24</sup>

17. Jerome (Heine 2002: 77).

18. Pausanias, *Descr.* 4.31.8.

19. *Greek Anthology* 9.58; Epigrams of Saint Gregory 8. 177.

20. Euripides, *Iph. taur.* 126. See also Nilsson 1971: 502, 509. She was born together with brother Apollo by the Cenchrius River in the area of Ephesus. Their parents were Zeus and Leto (Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.20 [C639–40]). Artemis was often pictured with bow and arrow and stag. Delos also claimed to be the birthplace of Artemis.

21. Murphy-O’Connor 2008: 99.

22. See the queen bee on coins (Ramsay 1994: 159–60; Scherrer 2000: 205).

23. Unlike breasts, the “eggs” have no nipples in statues that have been uncovered in the first century (Scherrer 2000: 213; Trebilco 2004: 22–23). Others have posited these are testicles of bulls (Murphy-O’Connor 2008: 7; LiDonnici 1992: 392–93).

24. Pausanias, *Descr.* 8. 13. 1; Ramsay 1994: 161; LSJ, 1097–98. Bees brought nourishment to the baby Zeus in some legends (Nilsson 1971: 542–44). The main function of a queen bee is to lay eggs and found new hives. This mother and queen bee “guided her swarming people” to their new abode (Ramsay 1994: 157). Xenophon

Pausanias mentions that the priestesses and priests of the Ephesian Artemis live in purity for a year “not only sexual but in all respects, and they neither wash nor spend their lives as do ordinary people, nor do they enter the home of a private man.”<sup>25</sup> Strabo describes the priests (*Megabyzi*, literally “set free by God”<sup>26</sup>) as “eunuchs” who are held in great honor. Maidens (virgins) served as colleagues with them in their priestly office.<sup>27</sup> Thus, scholars today are unclear whether the “eunuchs” simply were not sexually active for a year or they castrated themselves.<sup>28</sup> But, they would model a celibate religious lifestyle in honor of the virgin goddess.<sup>29</sup>

The temple of Artemis was the general bank or depository of Asia. Often private citizens deposited their money there. Others donated gifts to the goddess.<sup>30</sup> Acts records the silversmith Demetrius reminding his fellow artisans that “we get our wealth from this business” and, when Paul persuaded “a considerable number of people” that gods made with human hands were not real, their businesses would be affected (Acts 19:25–26). The wealth of the area resulted in a reputation for luxury garments. Athenaeus repeats Democritus’ boast that the Ephesians were devoted to luxury.<sup>31</sup> Ephesus also became a center for shipbuilding and trade. The temple was as well an asylum for the innocent.<sup>32</sup>

However, there was an underside to the religion of the Ephesian Artemis. Jerome notes that Paul wrote to Diana at Ephesus at: “the chief city of Asia where idolatry and the deceptions of the magicians’ arts which always accompany idolatry thrived . . . They, whom the error of demons had so long held and who knew that there are spiritual beings and powers and who had perceived a certain likeness of divinity in organs and

(*Oec.* 7.33–35) uses the queen bee as an example for a wife.

25. Pausanias, *Descr.* 8.13.1.

26. LSJ, 1086.

27. Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.23 [C641]; Murphy-O’Connor 2008: 24.

28. Kroeger, “God/dess” 1995: 58. Bennett (1967: 19–20, 38–39) adds that effeminate priests and sex confusion were part of the rites of Artemis at Ephesus. See also Kroeger 1992: 193–96; Ramsay 1895, 1:93–94; Ramsay 1927: 174.

29. “Virgin” may simply refer to being unmarried. Sex is prohibited only between husband and wife (Ramsay 1895, 1:95, 136). Married women were not allowed in the temple of Artemis (Strelan 1996: 73, 120).

30. Murphy-O’Connor 2008: 23, 52, 64–66; Trebilco 2004: 25–26.

31. Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12.525C; Murphy-O’Connor 2008: 50; Strelan 1996: 76. Artemis was called “savior” because her temple was a place of refuge (Hemer 1986: 48).

32. Murphy-O’Connor 2008: 26, 44, 123–24, 135–36, 150–51.

auguries and divinations, were in need of the apostle's commendation to God."<sup>33</sup> Artemis could use her arrows to protect, but also to attack. One etymology for her name was "slaughterer, butcher."<sup>34</sup> Artemis could protect mothers and kill them.<sup>35</sup> In festivals for Artemis, to keep Artemis from slaughtering the participants, "one must hold to a man's throat the sword, and spill the blood for hallowing and the Goddess' honour's sake."<sup>36</sup> Artemis's tales were not that different from legends about Amazon warriors who were required to slay a male enemy before they could marry.<sup>37</sup> Artemis was associated with ritual murder and there is evidence that human sacrifice was still practiced in the first century.<sup>38</sup> The festival of Artemis, like those of the Amazons, affirmed orgiastic religious practices.<sup>39</sup> When women went off to celebrate their festivals, they might "spend whole nights on the bare hills in dances which stimulated ecstasy, and in an intoxication perhaps partly alcoholic, but mainly mystical."<sup>40</sup>

Ephesus was well known as a center for the study and practice of magic. Artemis at Ephesus was related to magic, the use of techniques to assure human control or power over supernatural forces.<sup>41</sup> Magic appeals

33. Heine 2002: 77.

34. *OCD*, 126; *LSJ*, 248; Nilsson 1971: 509. Another etymology is "safe and sound" (Artemidorus Daldianus, *Onir.* 2.35; Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.6).

35. In Euripides' tales, first the angry Artemis demands the sacrifice of the maiden Iphigeneia, daughter of Agamemon, to appease herself (*Iph. aul.*, 89–93) and then snatches her from the altar to make her priestess of her temple in Taurica, north of the Black Sea. Whenever any Greek men came to that coast, they were seized and sacrificed. Iphigeneia was forced to consecrate them to Artemis for death on the altar. "I consecrate the victim," Iphigeneia laments "in rites of that dark cult wherein Artemis joys,—fair is its name alone." While Artemis barred murderers from her altars, she "yet joys herself in human sacrifice!" (Euripides, *Iph. taur.*, 35, 40, 381–84). Clement of Alexandria refers to these sacrifices (*Protr.*, ch. 3.).

36. Euripides, *Iph. taur.*, 1458–61.

37. Herododotus, *Hist.* 4. 117; Bennett 1967: 10–11.

38. Kroeger 1995: 58, 61; *OCD*, 127. Self-castration of the eunuchs, as consecration to the goddess, could be a frenzied and bloody rite (Thomas 1995: 91).

39. Fantham 1994: 134; Nilsson 1971: 503, 509.

40. Hawkes 1968: 126, 286. The Cretan Bacchic frenzy worship continued in Ephesus (Strabo, *Geogr.* 10.3.7 [C466]; Kroeger 1992: 54). The festival of Artemis included heavy drinking (Thomas 1995: 110), though not all aspects of the festivals were unwholesome. See Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 63, 175, 177, 199; Trebilco 1994: 321–22; Arnold 1972: 17–22.

41. *Webster's Dictionary* 2001: 1155. For an example of the mysteries of Artemies, see *New Docs.* 6, 1992: 200–2. Betz 1986 includes samples of ancient spells of power. A second-century Artemis even has zodiac signs on her chest (Erdemgil 2009: 60;

to unhealthy curiosity and the desire for power over others and oneself.<sup>42</sup> Magic and drugs were interrelated.<sup>43</sup> Artemis' name, together with the names of other gods, would be repeated in incantations.<sup>44</sup> Some Christians at Ephesus had previously participated in magic practices. When they willingly and publicly burned their valuable incantation books, the gospel message grew and became powerful (Acts 19:18–20). Today only a column of the temple remains.<sup>45</sup>

## ANALYTIC OUTLINE OF 1 TIMOTHY

Paul's overall purpose is to urge Timothy to promote the sound doctrine of God, Savior, who desires all to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth by countering the false teaching threatening the life of the church at Ephesus.

*I. Paul reminds Timothy to warn the false teachers at Ephesus not to teach different doctrine (1:1–20).*

- A. Introduction: Paul writes Timothy, his child in faith (1:1–2).
- B. Paul urges Timothy to encourage the Ephesians not to teach different doctrine, but rather love from a clean heart and a good conscience and genuine faith (1:3–7).
- C. In contrast to what is being taught, the law is intended for the unrighteous not the righteous (1:8–11).
- D. Even the Apostle Paul was once unrighteous, but he received mercy as an example to others (1:12–17).
- E. Paul charges Timothy to keep the faith and a good conscience (1:18–20).

*II. In order that all may be saved and come to knowledge of the truth, Paul promotes peaceable prayer, education, and leaders (2:1–3:16).*

---

LiDonnici 1992: 407).

42. Spencer 1995: 82.

43. *Pharmakeia* could refer to drugs or witchcraft (LSJ, 1917). The Ephesian Six Letters functioned as charms to make the bearers invincible (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12.548c; Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 51; Meinardus 1979: 92).

44. For an example of a syncretistic spell of attraction, see Betz 1986: 89.

45. Yamauchi 1980: 103; Scherrer 2000: 57; Ramsay 2001: 213.

A. Paul urges godly peaceful lives so that all may be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (2:1–15).

B. Godly overseeing helps the church advance the truth (3:1–16).

*III. Because God is Savior of all, Timothy should teach the words of the faith, not heterodoxy, while making sure he himself sets an example of a faithful believer (4:1–5:2).*

A. Ascetic heterodoxy was predicted by the Spirit (4:1–5).

B. Since God is Savior of all people, a good minister is nourished by the words of faith, refusing godless myths (4:6–10).

C. Timothy should become an example of a faithful believer as he treats others, spiritually enriches himself, promoting his spiritual gift, so that he will save himself and those who hear him (4:11–5:2).

*IV. Church leaders should be honored and justly treated so that the church is not open to attack (5:3–6:2).*

A. True widows should be honored but younger widows should remarry so that the church may not be open to attack (5:3–16).

B. Elders leading well should be doubly honored and impartially treated so good deeds will be evident (5:17–25).

C. Slaves should honor masters so God is not slandered (6:1–2).

*V. Timothy should fight his own fight of the faith, fleeing heterodox teaching (6:3–21).*

A. Heterodox teaching robs people of the truth, while piety with contentment is its own means of gain (6:3–10).

B. Timothy instead should pursue righteousness, fighting the good fight of the faith, guarding the commandment, not open to attack until Jesus returns (6:11–16).

C. The rich should rely on God, not riches (6:17–19).

D. Timothy should guard the deposit, turning away from false knowledge (6:20–21a).

E. Final greeting (6:21b).