

Ephesians

Appendix One Feminism, Spiritualism, and “Emerging Churches”

Introduction:

1. The church at Ephesus existed in a culture that was permeated with the mysticism of the worship of the goddess Artemis (Diana).
2. As a result, the Ephesian congregation had to confront many of the same problems that exist and that are on the rise in modern society.
3. This lesson will briefly address three such challenges and note how they were confronted by the inspired apostle, Paul.

I. Feminism: Then and Now

- A. The culture of Ephesus was centered upon the worship of the goddess Artemis.
 1. She was also known as Cybele and was the mother-goddess, the goddess of fertility.
 2. Her worship consisted of frenzied dancing, ceremonial prostitution, and even human sacrifice.
 3. Yet, the Temple of Artemis was also the Bank of Ephesus – her priests were also bankers.
 4. Thus, the goddess was central to the Ephesian religion, culture, and economy.
- B. Into this world of goddess-focused thinking, Paul brought the Gospel of God the Father.
 1. In Ephesians, Paul refers to God as Father some 8 times (1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23) – more than in any of his other writings.
 2. He explained God’s role as a Father...
 - a. In benevolence (1:3)
 - b. In provision (1:4-6)
 - c. In protection (1:7)
 - d. In wisdom (1:8-12; 3:9-11)
 - e. In honesty (1:17-18; 3:1-6)
 - f. In power (1:19-23)
 - g. In mercy (2:4-7)
 - h. In authority (2:10; 5:1-7)
 - i. In fellowship (2:18-22)
 - j. In love (3:14-21)
 - k. In supremacy (4:6; 5:18-21)
 - l. In peace (6:23)
 3. He even emphasizes the proper role for man as a husband, father, and master (5:22 – 6:9).
- C. Sadly, many in modern times have rejected the doctrine of God the Father for and embracing of the goddess.
 1. Gender-neutral Bibles
 2. Veneration of Mary – “Queen of Heaven” and co-redemptrix
 3. Exaltation of “Mother Earth”
 4. Ordination of women as preachers, “pastors,” and other church leaders
- D. Today, just as always, man needs the true knowledge of God as Father.

- II. Spiritualism: Then and Now
 - A. The worship of false gods and goddesses in Ephesus contained much mysticism and spiritualism (occult beliefs and practices).
 - B. Closely connected to modern day feminism is a similar spiritualism – an embracing of one’s “inner goddess.”
 - C. In modern society, this is seen best in two areas: the rise of Wicca and the incorporation of mystic practices into “Christian” churches.
 - D. Wicca – sometimes referred to as modern-day witchcraft – is basically goddess worship mixed with hints of ancient mysticism.

- III. The Theology of Emerging Churches
 - A. Emerging churches are the product of a movement begun late in the 20th century.
 - B. Rejecting “orthodox” and “institutional” religion, they sought to make Christianity more inclusive, tolerant, and friendly to the lost and to the varied denominations.
 - C. Embracing postmodern society, they claimed to be post-Protestant or post-Evangelical in their thinking and practice.
 - 1. Modernism introduced the idea of relativity in cultural systems.
 - 2. Postmodernism rejects the idea of absolute truth or knowledge.
 - D. Thus, emerging churches do not emphasize absolutes in doctrine or practice.
 - 1. The Bible is augmented with personal feelings and experiences.
 - 2. Preaching is redefined with videos, slide shows, internet, etc.
 - 3. Worship is changed to include sounds, smells, candles, icons, etc.
 - 4. Evangelism is focused on building relationships rather than conversion.
 - 5. The church’s role is viewed socially rather than spiritually.
 - E. Most emerging churches are inclusive of all beliefs, some even of non-Christian religions.
 - 1. The emphasis is on dialogue rather than debate or discourse.
 - 2. Each individual must find “God’s will” for him or her through such dialogues and personal experiences.
 - F. Many are willing to incorporate beliefs and practices of non-Christian religions into their lives and worship.
 - G. A similar way of thinking and worshipping existed in Ephesus, where many gods and goddesses (along with their inherent contradictions) were embraced.
 - H. Yet, Paul had much to say about this kind of mindset.
 - 1. He declared absolute truth and exclusive revelation (Eph. 3:3-4).
 - 2. He declared exclusive salvation in Christ alone (Eph. 1:6-7; 2:8-10).
 - 3. He declared exclusive fellowship in the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:1-6; 5:23).
 - 4. He declared the rejection of anything different (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3-5).
 - I. One must ask the question: “What is the emerging church emerging from?”
 - J. The answer is: “They are emerging from truth as a new denomination of man.”

Conclusion:

- 1. Paul’s teaching to the church at Ephesus has lasting importance for the world in all ages.
- 2. The problems and errors of men remain the same throughout time and location.
- 3. God’s Truth – revealed in His Holy Word – will stand forever.
- 4. We must hear and heed the Gospel of Christ.