

Grand Commandery Knights Templar of New Jersey
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Rt. Em. Grand Commander

October 2023

The devastating earthquake in Morocco on September 9th only added point to National Preparedness Month and what should be our concern for those afflicted by the vicissitudes of natural forces.

We should also be reminded of the February 6 earthquake that devastated Hierapolis, Turkey. An interesting aspect for this event. While the area was severely damaged, one of the few structures not damaged was the tomb of St. Philip the Apostle. Philip is only mentioned passingly in the Gospels, principally as the provider of the loaves and fishes to feed the crowd who attended the sermon on the Mount in Galilee. Hierapolis is located in the southwest of Asia Minor. Paul mentions it in his epistle to the Colossians as the home of a Christian community. It was best



Tomb of St. Philip in Hierapolis.

known as the location of an important temple to Apollo, with its *plutonion*, the 'mouth of Hell,' a cavern beneath the temple that was used for sacrifices, which was filled with noxious fumes leaking from the rocks. Philip had located here for his ministry after the Ascension of our Lord. In Revelation 2:17, St. John the Divine advises: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*



Temple of Apollo with its plutonion.

Recent publication of archeological excavations have added to our knowledge and understanding of the importance of the city of Ephesus, where Paul lived and preached for two years and wrote his epistle to the Corinthians. Ephesus was founded by Greek colonists about the same time as the building of the First Temple in Jerusalem in the tenth century B.C. From the time of Croesus of Lydia (in the 6th century B.C., Ephesus' religious life had centered around the fertility goddess identified by the Greeks with their goddess Artemis and by the Romans with Diana, who was worshipped in a temple where prostitution was legally permitted. This temple was one of the wonders of the ancient world (Acts 19: 35). Roman rule began around 133 B.C., Ephesus became a melting-pot of peoples, one of the cosmopolitan centers of the Roman Empire and a meeting-place of religions. A comparatively positive description of Ephesus is given in Revelation 2;1-7:

- 1. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus, write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*
- 2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou*

canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.

3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love.

5. Remember therefore from when thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes {followers of Nicholas, a sect in the early church at Ephesus}, which I also hate.

7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Archeologists have investigated the site of Ephesus from more than 150 years, but some of the most significant discoveries have been made recently by a team from the Austrian Archeological Institute, who unearthed a neighborhood dating to the fifth century A.D. This work has shown that Ephesus continued to be a lively center during the Byzantine era.

The team excavated a neighborhood of shops and businesses that had once been a major administrative space at the heart of Roman Ephesus. What surprised them was the remarkable state of preservation. The 200 square yards area was filled with storerooms, shops, kitchens, and taverns whose walls still stand more than ten feet high. They found these properties were packed with innumerable artifacts, including seven amphora still containing salted mackerel.

One shop specialized in the sale of oil lamps as well as hundreds of tiny ceramic bottles containing sacred ointments for purchase by Christian pilgrims visiting the city to see the tombs of Sts. Timothy and John. The pilgrim bottles show how closely the business conducted in the city was linked to the pilgrimage industry.

The team soon realized that the state of preservation was related to sudden abandonment. Freshly cooked meals and cash boxes were left behind before a blanket of ash covered the city. Arrowheads and spear tips in the debris as well as coins date the event to 614/5 A.D. During the period of 602-628 A.D. the Byzantine Empire and the Sasanian Empire of Persia were at war. The debris indicates that the Sasanians sacked and burned the city. Ephesus never recovered, the tombs of Timothy and John were lost forever.



Ceramic bottle containing sacred ointments for purchase by pilgrims to tombs of Sts. Timothy and John.

The Grand Commandery Knights Templar of New Jersey will confer the Order of the Temple on October 28 at the Masonic Temple in Mt. Royal, NJ. Registration will commence at 8am.