

ACTS CHAPTER NINETEEN

Read vs. 1-7

This chapter records time spent in Ephesus on Paul's 3rd missionary journey. He stayed in Ephesus for about 3 years. It was a city of 1/2 million people. It was also the center of witchcraft, black arts, and the worship of Artemis (Greek goddess of the hunt and fertility) Artemis is equivalent to Diana of Roman mythology.

Paul makes mention of his time in Ephesus in I Cor. 15:32, where he says he fought wild beasts. It is not certain that the "wild beasts" were animals, although that is very possible. Even if the beasts he was thinking of were of the human variety, we know that this time in Ephesus involved great trials. In I Cor. 16:8 & 9 Paul says that he was having many great opportunities to preach in Ephesus and wanted to stay for awhile even though many people were opposing him. 2 Cor. 1:8-11 says that they were under great pressure and didn't even think they would survive, but God protected them.

Satan was actively opposing them in Ephesus. He was protecting his territory, but God had other plans for this city and He WILL have victory!

1. *In Ephesus, Paul finds another pocket of people like Apollos. They were disciples of whom when Paul first met them? (vs. 1-3)*

They had never heard the rest of the story....it just hadn't spread far enough yet to reach them. This is another illustration of the transitions that are taking place in the book of Acts. The first century church dealt with situations which no longer exist. When the gospel is preached today, it is the story of redemption through Christ, not repentance to prepare for the coming of the Messiah as John the Baptist preached. As soon as the God fearing people heard about the work of Christ, they were baptized in the name of Jesus.

2. *When Paul shared "the rest of the story" with them, what happened? (vs. 4-6)*

God used speaking in tongues to confirm their conversion to Paul. This is the 2nd and last time after Pentecost that this occurs in Acts. The other reference was to Cornelius in chapter ten. Once again, this is a confirmation to Paul that these believers had now put their faith in Christ. Everyone who is born-again today is immediately sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30 & Ro. 8:9) It does not need to be confirmed by speaking in tongues.....it is confirmed as fact by the word of God. Notice in Acts 19:2 that the diagnostic question that Paul asks them is "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" When a person then or now puts their faith in Christ, they receive the Holy Spirit.

Read vs. 8-20

3. *Vs. 7 says that 12 men became Christians, but how did the rest of the synagogue react to*

the gospel? (vs. 8 & 9)

These 12 men were already “disciples” according to verse 1. They were worshippers of the one true God and probably Jewish proselytes. It was not difficult for them to put their faith in Christ. They already worshipped God and their hearts were fully prepared to hear about what Christ had done for them. They rejoiced to hear the gospel story. But as it always is, then and now, not everyone believed. The gospel divides people as some believe and some reject. Satan stirs up the animosity to protect his own territory.

4. *As a result, Paul took the believers, left the synagogue and had church daily in _____ (vs. 9)*

This was probably a discouraging turn of events for the believers. They had to leave their synagogue (church) and start meeting in a public place. Notice, however, in verse 10 how God used this change of venue for His glory. People who never would have entered the synagogue to hear Paul preach were now able to hear him whenever they wanted. Paul preached daily for two years and everyone, both Jews and Greeks, heard the gospel.

5. *Describe the degree of healing power that Paul had at this time. (vs. 11 & 12)*

Perhaps the Holy Spirit had to be particularly obvious because of the presence of Satan in this city. Consider Eph. 6:12 which reminds us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. More ammunition was needed, so God provided it in the form of healing miracles.

This does not give credence to those who claim to have this power today. Once again I remind you that this time in history was unique and events that happened during this time were for a very specific purpose. Notice Hebrews 2:3 & 4. “His salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.” The new testament writings were not yet available for the church to search and to prove that what was being spoken was authentic. God confirmed it when needed with miracles as in this chapter which records the founding of the church in Ephesus.

6. *Paul's power impressed all types of people. Who wanted to get in on the action in vs. 13 & 14?*

These men were not believers. Satan had evidently given them power as it suited his needs. Now they recognize the tremendous spiritual power of Paul and decide to add this to their repertoire like the rest of their incantations. The spirits that were indwelling these unfortunate people were not so easily fooled. They surely did recognize the power of Jesus, but they didn't acknowledge that the sons of Sceva possessed it, which they did not. Compare Mark 5:1-10 where the demons fall down before Christ and beg for mercy.

7. *What evidence do you find in vs. 15 and 16 that these were really spirit beings and not just*

diseases that were being dealt with?

It is interesting to remember that the book of Acts was written by a physician (Luke). Dr. Luke recognized that these illnesses that were being healed were caused by evil spirits. This in no way intimates that all physical diseases are the result of spiritual issues. Ephesus was a satanic stronghold and Paul was doing spiritual battle. God expects believers today to not only pray for healing but to also take advantage of the medical advances and technology that are available to us. Yes, it's possible that physical problems are a result of spiritual issues, but it is more probable that they are the result of unhealthy lifestyles, aging, contaminants and germs!

8. *How did this affect the townspeople? (vs. 17-20)*

In scripture, we can often determine why God did something by noticing what resulted from it. Such is the case in this chapter. The result of these extraordinary miracles was the repentance, confession and salvation of many Jews and Greeks. It no doubt took these powerful demonstrations to win them over; they were used to seeing the supernatural, but the supernatural they usually saw was demonic. This was something that was greater than the evil spirits and the magicians. In verse 17 it says that the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. God had accomplished His will and demonstrated His power.

In verse 19 we see that many of the new believers had been practicing sorcery. Now they publicly repent and destroy their scrolls which held the secrets to their former way of life. A drachma was equal to about one day's wage. 50,000 drachmas would be equal to 136 years of combined wages. We can understand why it says in verse 20 that the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. News about this event would be a witness to this whole area of the world. There would have been many different reactions to this town's bonfire, but nobody would have dismissed its importance.

Read vs. 21-41

9. *What was the occupation of Demetrius? (vs. 24)*

These shrines, or statues, of Artemis were probably household idols. Many such idols have been found in archeological digs but never ones made out of silver. Demetrius may have been the leader of a co-op of silversmiths. He called his fellow tradesmen together to organize a protest against Paul and his preaching.

10. *Why had his business been slow lately? (vs. 24-27)*

When money is involved, people take an interest! Notice verse 27 where he tried to make his case sound more holy and adds that Artemis's/Diana's magnificence was being destroyed, however, his first objection in verse 25 is probably closer to the truth. He was losing income.

Notice in verse 26 where he reports that Paul had "led astray" large number of people. As

people turned to the one true God, they turned away from their idols, exactly as they should. The thing that gave Paul great reason to rejoice was the same thing that was going to get him in trouble. Satan had found another way to hinder the work and Demetrius was just the man to use.

11. The merchants whipped-up the people into a state of riot. How does vs. 32 describe the confusion?

Verse 29 mentions that Paul's traveling companions were seized. Aristarchus is mentioned again in Acts 27:2. He is still Paul's traveling companion when Paul is on the ship headed to Rome. In Col 4:10 Paul mentions him as his fellow prisoner. Apparently he was also in prison in Rome along with Paul. Paul also refers to Aristarchus as a Jewish brother in Col 4:11. He was a dear friend and comforter to the apostle.

In verse 29 we see that they were dragged into the "theater". The remains of this theater still stand in Ephesus. It could hold 25,000 people. Paul very much wanted to enter the theater himself to defend his beloved companions, but the other disciples held him back. Apparently Paul wasn't with them when they were arrested or he no doubt would have been involved with them. In verse 31 we read that Paul had made friends with some of the officials and even they had begged him to stay away. They could see that this frenzied crowd was out of control and things could quickly become life-threatening.

The scene is one of great confusion and mob mentality. Most of the people didn't even know what was going on, but as rumors of Artemis being somehow dishonored they were more than happy to join in the uproar.

A man named Alexander was urged by the crowd to speak, but he was unable to gain the control of the crowd. 2 Tim. 4:14 mentions Alexander as being a metalworker who had done great harm to Paul, and Timothy is warned about him. 1 Tim 1:20 Paul mentions Alexander as being one who had rejected the faith and had blasphemed.

12. The Ephesians worshipped Diana because they believed her image had _____
_____.(vs. 35)

Possibly they were in possession of a meteor that resembled a woman. At any rate, they had formed a whole religion around this fable and many had found a way to make a living from it.

13. Briefly explain how the town clerk dispersed the crowd. (vs. 35-41)

The city clerk, similar to a mayor, was finally able to quiet the crowd. He reminds them that the courts are open and that they should use the legal system for whatever complaints they had. There is no indication that he cared personally what happened to the men, but he did care about bringing on an investigation from the Roman government and not being able to give a logical explanation for the riot. God used him on that day to protect the disciples.