

Don't Relish the Relics!

Acts 19:23-32

In the ancient city of Ephesus, the goddess Diana was zealously worshipped. The temple erected in her honor was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was a massive structure. The silver-smiths in the city made idols representing this goddess, but their business was being seriously threatened by the many people who were turning to Christ.



Paul's powerful teaching ministry was felt throughout Asia (*Acts 19:9-10*). Many came to know Christ, ceased from their idol worship, and destroyed their magic books (*Acts 19:19*). The sacred "shrines" mentioned in *Acts 19:24* were probably silver replicas of the Ephesian temple, especially the inner part of the temple where there was a shrine to Diana. Perhaps this consisted of a statue of the goddess, or possibly a holy area containing the stone (meteorite?) that supposedly fell from heaven (*Acts 19:35*). People could purchase their own miniature silver shrines which they could bring to their homes as objects of worship or good luck charms.

There is a tendency, even on the part of God's people, to turn to relics, rather than to look to the Lord. Even the Israelites took the bronze serpent from the days of Moses (*Numbers 21*) and made it into a shrine of sinful worship which godly King Hezekiah had to destroy (*2 Kings 18:4*). What should have been a wonderful reminder of God's deliverance and a type of Christ's death (*John 3:14*), degenerated into a terrible idolatrous relic.

In a similar manner today, the symbol of the Cross has become a mere relic to many religious people who wear it or mount it, hoping it will provide protection or blessings.

Sadly, so many do not understand the true significance of the Cross: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (*1 Cor. 1:18*).



~George Zeller: www.middletonbiblechurch.org

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