

Acts Chapter 19

Paul's Lengthy Ministry in Ephesus

Summary

In this chapter Paul continues his third missionary journey. The focus of this chapter is upon the city of Ephesus where Paul ministered for three years (Acts 20:31). Ephesus was the greatest city in Asia Minor and from Ephesus the light of the gospel would go far and wide, reaching into all of Asia (Acts 19:10,26). At the end of the chapter an angry crowd caused an uproar because the increasing number of Christian converts was adversely affecting the idol-making business of the silversmiths. The gospel was having an impact upon society.

Introduction

In Acts 18 Paul had left the city of Corinth, and he came with Priscilla and Aquila to the city of Ephesus. He only stayed a short time in Ephesus because he was anxious to get back to Jerusalem and to Antioch, the church which had sent him forth. God used Paul's brief contact with Ephesus in a mighty and wonderful way for future ministry which we will see unfold here in chapter 19.

When Paul first went to Ephesus he entered into the synagogue, which he was accustomed to do in every city. One might think that Paul was commissioned to go to the Jews; yet that privilege was given to Peter who had a special ministry to the circumcision (Gal. 2:7-8). Although the gospel of the uncircumcision was given to Paul (Gal. 2:7), yet the Apostle to the Gentiles still had a heart of love and compassion for his Jewish brethren (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1). Paul always kept the Jews close to his heart. This love for the Jews will create quite a problem for Paul as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

As Paul entered the synagogue, his unique mastery of the Hebrew Scriptures helped him as he reasoned with the Jews in order to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:19). Remember, Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest Jewish scholars of that day (Acts 5:34; 22:3). Paul was born in Tarsus but was raised in Jerusalem, and from his earliest years was trained in the deep things of God presented from a rabbinic perspective.

The Jewish brethren in Ephesus desired that Paul might stay with them longer, but Paul did not consent to their request (Acts 18:20). Usually, when Paul preached in a synagogue it was not long before he was thrown out. In this case, the Jews were fascinated with his understanding of the Scriptures and invited him to teach and prolong his stay with them. Yet Paul insisted that he had to leave in order to keep the feast in Jerusalem. "I will return again unto you, if God will. And he (Paul) sailed from Ephesus" (Acts 18:21).

Paul went to Caesarea, the port city of the Roman province of Judea. He then went up to Jerusalem to fulfill a promise he had made years earlier, that he would not forget the poor. There were starving believers in Jerusalem who had been excommunicated, disinherited and persecuted by Christ-hating,

unbelieving Jews. The result was they were in desperate straits. Paul wanted to help them in any way he could, and to build a bond between the mother church in Jerusalem and these Gentile churches that God had enabled him to establish throughout the Roman world.

Paul also returned to Antioch, his sending church, to report back to them what God had accomplished through him. As far as we know, this was Paul's last visit to Antioch. From there he began his third missionary journey.

In his third missionary journey, Paul launched out on his own, covering areas where he had previously been (Acts 18:23), strengthening the disciples. If Paul went on foot, it is estimated that he walked 1,500 miles in an area where there were dangerous robbers. Finally, Paul arrived at Ephesus. In the meantime, key events had been taking place in Ephesus. In Acts chapter 18 we learned that Apollos, a man mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. He was greatly helped by the ministry of Aquila and Priscilla. The theology of Apollos was sound but it was incomplete and insufficient. He needed help in order to be brought up to date with God's revealed truth. As we come to Acts 19, we will be introduced to about a dozen men who were very much like Apollos. They only knew of the ministry of John the Baptist. Their knowledge of Jesus Christ was terribly incomplete.

John the Baptist never set foot outside of the Holy Land, and died prematurely in a dungeon by the Dead Sea. Yet John had a powerful message that reached all the way down to Alexandria, the home of Apollos, and also into Asia where, in Ephesus, there were also disciples of John. John's message was simple: ***Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, and He's the coming King. If you repent, you will be spiritually qualified to enter the kingdom that only Christ can establish.*** John had every expectation that in his lifetime the kingdom would be established. In fact, he was deeply discouraged and depressed in the dungeon because he did not yet see the kingdom established. John sent two of his disciples to Jesus and they asked, "Are you He that should come, or should we look for Another?" (Matthew 11:1-6) John the Baptist was the voice of one crying in the wilderness and he was the one to prepare the way, but where was the kingdom which he announced? Based on Isaiah 35:5-6, John should have recognized the Messiah's credentials by the miracles which He performed. Jesus reminded him of this: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (Matt. 11:5-6).

Not long after this John the Baptist was beheaded. Notice the wonderful statement Jesus made concerning John, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). Unfortunately Israel was not ready to receive the message of John the Baptist. Yet, one is coming in the future who will see different results: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5). Thus ends the Old Testament. When the disciples saw Elijah and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, they said to Jesus, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus said, "Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all thing" (Matt. 17:10-11). John the Baptist did not restore all things, but Elijah will!

Apollos is described at the end of Acts chapter 18. This man was "mighty in the Scriptures," and through the help of Aquila and Priscilla he came into a deeper understanding of the death of Jesus on the cross, His bodily resurrection from the dead and His ascension to heaven, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to create the Church which is the body and bride of Christ. The Church began on the Day of Pentecost. John the Baptist did not know any of these things, nor did his disciples. Apollos

had been instructed in the deeper things of the gospel, thanks to Aquila and Priscilla.

Acts 19:1

Apollos was ministering at Corinth, building on the foundation that Paul had laid: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6). Paul and Apollos exemplified wonderful teamwork. This is the last mention of Apollos in the book of Acts. Paul came to Ephesus a second time; his first visit was recorded in Acts 18:19. On his way to Ephesus he passed through the “upper coasts” (inland areas). Thayer identifies these areas as “the part of Asia Minor more remote from the Mediterranean, farther east.” Barnes identifies these areas as the more elevated regions of Asia Minor, including the provinces of Phrygia and Galatia, in contrast to Ephesus which was part of the low maritime regions.¹

On this second visit to this great city Paul found disciples. Luke uses the term “disciples” cautiously to refer to born again believers, genuine disciples, not merely those professing to be disciples. Yet there was something about these disciples that struck Paul as being strange. These were disciples of John the Baptist and they were lacking certain essential truths concerning the Christian faith. In this respect they were very similar to Apollos prior to his being instructed by Aquilla and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-26). These 12 disciples (19:7) of John the Baptist, like Apollos, were at this point similar to an earthly Jewish Old Testament saint, not yet in Christ as a heavenly saint. Anyone else in such a transitional state would likewise eventually hear the gospel of the grace of God and come to faith in the Lord Jesus as crucified and risen, and thus come to be in Christ as a heavenly saint also.

Acts 19:2

Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they first believed. Paul’s question was not suggesting a reception of the Spirit at some point after their conversion, as is taught today in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles.² He was simply asking if they had received the Spirit when they first believed.³ Darby’s translation is accurate: “Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?” Compare Paul’s clear statement in Ephesians 1:13. It was essential that these men believe the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24), not merely the gospel of the kingdom that was preached by John the Baptist.

The answer of these men indicated a lack of understanding concerning the Holy Spirit: “No, we have not even heard if the Holy Spirit is being received” (Legacy Standard Bible). It is good to remember what our Lord taught in John 7:39: “Now He said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed

¹Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 272 in the section on Acts.

²This wrong understanding is also supported by a misleading translation in the KJV, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

³In Acts, a transitional book, the Holy Spirit came upon people after they believed in Acts 8:15-16 and here in Acts 19. However, the normal pattern of the New Testament is that people receive the Spirit the moment they believe. Those who believe receive the Spirit immediately (John 7:38-39; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 8:9).

in Him were going to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (NET Bible). When John the Baptist preached, the Holy Spirit had not yet come and had not yet been given. Yet, these disciples of John needed to know that He had indeed come.

Acts 19:3

These disciples, similar to Apollos (Acts 18:25), were disciples of John the Baptist. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance (Acts 19:4). The purpose of this baptism was to get the Jews to acknowledge and confess their sins in preparation for the coming of God’s Savior. Part of John’s message included the mention of the Holy Spirit: “He (the Messiah) shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 3:16). It is not that these men had never heard of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, but they had not heard that the Holy Spirit had come as John the Baptist had predicted He would. The baptism with the Holy Spirit first took place on the Day of Pentecost and these men were ignorant of this. Woodbridge describes the situation:

They were still living spiritually in the days of John the Baptist’s ministry at the Jordan. Their outlook was anachronistic, for events of great moment had occurred since the days of John’s preaching. Jesus had died on Calvary for the remission of sins and had been raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit had been poured out. They were standing on the rock of repentance. They needed the Rock of Ages. Their hope was in a Redeemer to come. They needed to know that He had come, that He had brought “life and immortality to light through the gospel,” and that the Holy Ghost was the source of power to all those who put their trust in the Saviour.⁴

These disciples were Old Testament-type saints. In the Old Testament, everyone who genuinely believed God’s Word was justified and born again. Abraham is one example of this (Rom. 4:1-5). Yet, Old Testament saints were not baptized in the Holy Spirit, into the body and bride of Christ. They were regenerated, and only the Holy Spirit can regenerate people. They were saved by the grace of God, based on the merits and the blood of Jesus. They were saved on credit, on the basis of that future payment, known by God, that would take place at Calvary (Rom. 3:25). They were saved but they were not Spirit baptized. Spirit baptism is a unique relationship to the Spirit of God and to the Lord Jesus that has been true of born again Christians since the Day of Pentecost. Hence, pre-Pentecost saints, including John the Baptist himself, did not have the relationship that Christians now have as members of the body and bride of Christ. Spirit baptism immerses or places a believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

In the Old Testament there was such a thing as proselyte baptism as Gentiles would come into the synagogues and be overwhelmed by the magnificence of the message they heard from the Old Testament. Such a message was in infinite contrast to the awful distortions found in the pagan systems that they had previously known. Jewish literature, such as the Talmud, describes such proselyte baptisms. Then there was another kind of baptism instituted by John the Baptist. It was a baptism unto repentance. This shocked the Jewish leaders of the day who were opposed to John’s ministry. John’s baptism was an outward sign that the person had acknowledged his sins, genuinely repented, and believed the message that he had heard from John.

⁴Charles Woodbridge, *Standing on the Promises*, p. 126.

When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, He sent the Spirit of God in a special way to create the Church on the day of Pentecost. On that day a new form of water baptism began to be practiced, which we now label as Christian baptism (Acts 2:41). The book of Acts refers to this baptism as being “baptized in the name of Jesus” which means in His authority. The Lord Jesus instituted Christian baptism in Matthew 28:19 as part of the Great Commission: “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” This was different from the baptism of John the Baptist and different from the proselyte baptism previously described.

This information helps us to better understand Paul’s question, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” Their answer made it clear that they were baptized unto John’s baptism, which was a baptism unto repentance. Someone has humorously described these twelve men (verse 7) as “Rip Van Winkles.” They had spiritually slept through the vast transformation that God had accomplished at Jerusalem in the creation of the Church. Many years had gone by since this had happened, and they had totally missed it. They were born again, but not Christians in the technical sense. They were born again like their leader John the Baptist, but were not members of the body of Christ. In one sense it could be said that they woke up to discover that they were in a drastically different dispensation!

Acts 19:4-5

Paul reminded them that John the Baptist taught that his disciples should believe on the Lord Jesus who would come after Him. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of Jesus, that is, in the authority of Jesus.⁵ “Heard” here implies they heeded, responded to, and believed the gospel of the Lord Jesus that the apostle Paul presented to them.

In the Great Commission, all authority was given to Jesus and He gave the command to disciple all nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the previous chapter of Acts, we were not told that Apollos was re-baptized, but we assume that he was introduced to Christian baptism, as were these men. This is the only instance we have in the New Testament of people being rebaptized. Christians should not be rebaptized today unless their first baptism was illegitimate. For example, infant baptism would not be a valid baptism since a baby is incapable of exercising saving faith. Also, some people have been baptized but later realized that they were not saved at the time. A rebaptism would be appropriate in such cases because, according to the Bible, faith must precede water baptism. As a general rule, water baptism is done once at the beginning of the Christian life, whereas communion (the Lord’s Table) is observed on a regular basis (“often”—1 Cor. 11:26).

John’s baptism was a “baptism of repentance.” Before people are ready for the Saviour, they must first see themselves as sinners. An important part of John’s ministry of preparing the way for the Saviour was to help the people see that they were sinful in God’s sight and that they needed to flee from the coming wrath. This aspect of John’s ministry is illustrated in Luke 3:7-18.

⁵Does baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus conflict with the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19? See Appendix 2.

Acts 19:6-7

When the Holy Spirit came upon them, they became members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Not only did they believe the message of John the Baptist, but now they also believed the Christian gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This is the fourth and last major category showing the reception of the Holy Spirit during the transition period covered by the Book of Acts:

1. The Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
2. The Samaritans (Acts 8).
3. The Gentiles (Acts 10).
4. The Disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19).

The Holy Spirit came on these twelve men with the result that they spoke in tongues and prophesied. In Acts 8, when the Samaritans believed the true gospel, they were saved. Yet, it was not until Peter and John came up from Jerusalem and laid hands on them that they received the Holy Spirit, indicating that they were now members of the body of Christ, the Church. This was a public demonstration that the Samaritan church would not be a distinct entity from the previously established churches made up primarily of Jewish believers. Regardless of ethnic background, when a person believes on Christ, he becomes a member of Christ's true Church. There is one true Church, not a Jewish church, not a Gentile church and not a Samaritan church. Instead, Christ has one Church, one body of believers under His Headship.

These twelve men were believers, in the Old Testament sense. They lacked vital information about the true Christian gospel. When the full light of the gospel shone upon them, Paul was there to lay his hands on them and officially welcome them into Christ's Church. Paul had apostolic authority to do this.

These disciples of John spoke in tongues.⁶ We are not told in Acts 8 that the Samaritans spoke in tongues, but many commentators think they probably did. When a new ethnic group came into the body of Christ, the gift of tongues marked the event. This happened in Acts 2 when the Church first began and also in Acts 10 when Gentiles first entered the Church. The gift of tongues was a special sign given in the early Church to indicate that God had a new program, the Church, and that God was moving away from His former program which centered in Israel. Concerning the probability that tongues were spoken in Acts 8, Zeller says the following:

Although not specifically stated, it is almost certain that the Samaritan believers also spoke in tongues when they received the gift of the Spirit. Probably it was this manifestation of tongues that so impressed Simon (Acts 8:18-19). God once again used tongues to *signal* an important turning point in the forward progress of the gospel. The Jews could not help but be impressed by this drastic change in God's dealing with men (compare Matt. 10:5; John 4:9; 8:48). The hated Samaritans were now fellow members of the same body! The enmity had been abolished at the cross (cf. Eph. 2:13-22)!⁷

⁶See Appendix 1, *Speaking in Tongues at Ephesus*.

⁷George Zeller, *God's Gift of Tongues* [Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005], p. 38.

What took place in the early history of the Church is difficult for us to understand today because we no longer have Apostles and we no longer have the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 13:8). We have something better, even the completed New Testament Scriptures. None of these men had a completed New Testament, nor did Peter and Paul. John was the only Apostle who lived long enough to have the whole Bible as it was completed by his own pen. Sign miracles were given early in the first century to confirm the genuine divine reality of this new organism, Christ's Church, until the completion of the New Testament. These miraculous gifts were a temporary provision which God granted to the early Church. This is the last instance of speaking in tongues found in the book of Acts.

It is quite possible that these twelve men became leaders in the church at Ephesus. We know that these men were immediately responsive to the fuller light of the gospel. Believing hearts will normally respond in the right way to new light from God. As time went on they would have been further taught by Paul on the deeper truths of the Christian faith.

Acts 19:8

Paul had already attended the synagogue in Ephesus on his previous visit at the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19). At that time they wanted Paul to stay longer with them, which he did not do; now he has returned. For three months he spoke boldly in the Jewish synagogue. Can you imagine these Jews somehow tolerating Paul, for three solid months, teaching them the unsearchable riches of Christ? His main theme was the kingdom of God which was certainly a topic of great interest to the Jewish people. For about 13 weeks Paul was "reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God" (NKJV). The verb "disputing" (KJV) or "reasoning" (NKJV) was also found in Acts 17:2,17; 18:4,19. Paul practiced this whenever he went into synagogues. He reasoned with the Jews, which involved using arguments based on Old Testament Scriptures. The verb "persuading" was used also in Acts 18:4. Paul's goal was to persuade the Jews that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of so many Old Testament prophecies.

The emphasis on teaching about the kingdom is seen in two other passages: 1) During the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension Jesus spoke to the disciples "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:4). This was important because the disciples were expecting the kingdom to be established soon (Acts 1:6). 2) In the last verse of the book of Acts we learn that for two whole years Paul had contact with various people and preached to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 28:31). In these passages we are not told the content of Christ's kingdom teaching and preaching. No doubt Paul would have covered both the earthly and the heavenly spheres of the kingdom of God and the truths associated with each. We must assume that Paul accurately presented the intricate aspects of kingdom truth which are taught in both the Old Testament and New Testament. There is no justification for the idea that Christ taught a "kingdom now" theology, that the kingdom is now "within you" in some mystical way.

The doctrine of the kingdom of God is not an easy topic to expound. There are great complexities associated with this teaching. The universal kingdom is distinct from the mediatorial kingdom. Also, the diligent Bible student must carefully explain and distinguish the following: 1) the offer of the kingdom by John the Baptist, Christ and the Apostles; 2) the rejection of the kingdom by the Jews; 3) the postponement of the kingdom; 4) the gospel of the kingdom preached during the tribulation; 5) the reception of the kingdom by the Jews at the end of the tribulation; 6) the establishment of the kingdom on earth (Matt. 24:14), the same kingdom envisioned by all the Old

Testament prophets. Paul may have even communicated to them our Lord's teaching on the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13).⁸

Dr. Alva McClain was Dr. Whitcomb's theology professor at Grace Seminary in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Dr. McClain spent much of his life studying what the Bible says about the kingdom from Genesis to Revelation. He wrote a masterful work entitled, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. Today the doctrine of the kingdom is often neglected. Now our message is not, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Yet this does not negate the fact that the kingdom is coming. Today God's program centers in His Church, the body and bride of Christ. However, there is a kingdom coming and we are transferred positionally into that kingdom, in its heavenly sphere and associations, according to Colossians 1:13, "[God the Father] hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Church saints will function in that kingdom, in reigning over the earthly kingdom as Christ's Bride-Queen, when it does finally appear. As born again believers, we are citizens of that kingdom, in its heavenly sphere, even now. Paul told the Corinthian believers that they would judge or rule over angels and they would judge or rule over the world (1 Cor. 6:2-3). We will have a major role in Christ's future kingdom, and God expects us to be excited about that and look forward to it.

The teaching of the kingdom involves Israel and the Church, as well as the Gentile nations. The doctrine of the kingdom is complex; yet it is a major part of Bible teaching. Paul taught the Ephesian believers about God's coming kingdom.⁹

Acts 19:9

Due to hard and unbelieving hearts, Paul's message was rejected by certain Jews. They spoke evil of "that way." This refers to the way of Jesus, the One who said, "I am **the way**, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). The early Christians were often called followers of the way (see Acts 9:2; and also 19:23; 22:4; 22:14, 22). "The way" involves the message of the gospel, pointing to the risen and glorified Christ who is the only way to God.

How did Paul respond? Instead of compromising his message and watering it down in order to keep from offending people, he separated out the true disciples, that is, those who had come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and who were truly teachable. This was a very wise and marvelous choice. There comes a time when arguing and debating and confronting those who are not teachable must come to an end. Paul did what he could to reach the Jews in the synagogue and spent many weeks there, but it was time to depart. May God help us to reach everyone that we can using legitimate means and methods, in a way that honors God's Word. Yet apparently the majority of Jews in the synagogue ultimately rejected Paul's message. Paul took those who were responsive and teachable

⁸For a full discussion of Matthew 13, see <https://middletownbiblechurch.org/matthew/mat13.pdf>

⁹Many Bible teachers today embrace "Kingdom Now" theology, meaning that they believe the kingdom has been established today during this Church Age. Yet the emphasis in the New Testament is upon the future kingdom which will be established upon this earth when Christ the King returns in power and great glory. Dr. McClain taught against "Kingdom Now" theology, and more recently Dr. Andy Woods has written an excellent volume, *The Coming Kingdom* (Grace Gospel Press, 423 pages) which presents strong Biblical arguments against this erroneous teaching.

and put them into a special place called “the school [lecture hall] of Tyrannus.”

“Disputing” or “reasoning” is the same word found in the previous verse. Paul reasoned and argued from the Scriptures because there is nothing more important than understanding what God has said. Our greatest mental exercise should be devoted to learning the truth of God’s inspired revelation and sharing it with others.

This school had apparently been established by a notorious demanding teacher who was called the tyrant!¹⁰ Perhaps many students feel this way about a teacher who demands that they master everything that has been taught and prepare fully for final exams! According to tradition, from about 11:00 a.m. each day until 4:00 p.m., six days a week, Paul rented this building and taught the disciples the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).¹¹ This would total about 30 hours a week of Biblical instruction. What amazing theological training was given to faithful men so that they could teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

Acts 19:10

Paul’s stay in Ephesus was the longest stay in one location during his missionary journeys. Three months (v. 8) and two years (v. 10) equals two years and three months. In Acts 20:31 we have an indication that his total stay was even longer (three years).

Many of the cities where Paul planted churches were strategic centers that, when evangelized, served as focal points from which the gospel radiated out to the surrounding areas. Other examples are Antioch in Pisidia (13:14), Thessalonica (17:1), Athens (17:15) and Corinth (18:1).¹²

Paul continued this indoctrination program for two years with remarkable results that reached far and wide! Some say he taught 3,000 hours in that school during this two-year period! What would it be like to have a syllabus representing 3,000 hours of teaching? If all these hours of teaching could have been recorded for posterity, what a precious audio library that would be! Yet, miraculously, our God has provided His God-breathed Scriptures in such a perfect and condensed manner which permanently preserves and communicates to us everything we need to know for His glory in Christ Jesus and for our spiritual good in every way!

Notice Paul’s evangelistic strategy according to the sovereign leading and timing of the Holy Spirit: “so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” We remember an earlier time when Paul was forbidden to go to Asia (Acts 16:6). It was not the right time then, but later it was the perfect time. Asia would refer to that area which today is called western Turkey. The term refers to the Roman province of Asia, roughly the western third of Asia

¹⁰Our word “tyrant” is derived from this Greek term “Tyrannus.”

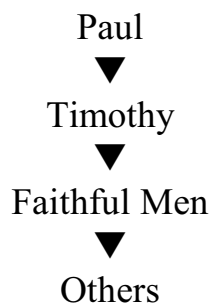
¹¹One Greek manuscript, Codex Beza, states that Paul used this lecture hall from the fifth to the tenth hour (11 A.M. to 4 P.M.). This would be during the heat of the day when most people would be resting. In the early morning hours Paul probably worked at his tentmaking trade (compare Acts 20:34).

¹²*NIV Study Bible* note under Acts 19:10.

Minor. How were so many people reached? In the Great Commission Christ told His Church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever that Christ had commanded them (Matt. 28:19-20). Such seems to be impossible! Yes, indeed it is, which is why Jesus added this infinitely precious footnote: “And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5) but Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). I can do the impossible as long as Christ enables me and empowers me and illumines me! It is almost beyond comprehension what a local body of believers can accomplish under God, if the Great Commission is taken seriously. Paul taught the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

God’s multiplication program involved the following: These disciples were so thoroughly and carefully taught (mostly from the Old Testament), that they would go out and invite their neighbors and friends into a home and teach them what they had heard. This was done so effectively that other people went out and did the same and reached other people. It became a chain reaction until God’s truth spread over the whole province of Asia, and within twenty-four months the whole region heard the gospel truthfully taught. All of this never would have happened if Paul had just kept arguing with those unbelievers in the synagogue of Ephesus. This was a case where a God-led separation produced vastly greater results in the long term.

God’s people must not water down and compromise the message. Give the whole message to those few who will believe it, and they will be trained to teach others. Paul restates the Great Commission to Timothy: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).



The result is a powerful outreach. Satan knows the plan also, and he works his own version very effectively. In America, Canada and the Western World, Satan has a plan involving accredited world-renown universities. Dr. Whitcomb attended one of these: Princeton University. Students are willing to pay vast amounts of money to spend years of their time to master information which is in total contradiction to what God has said in the only Book which He ever wrote. There is not one major university on this earth that is reputable, accredited, and prestigious that teaches anything resembling sound Biblical doctrine. Princeton University used to have a President named Jonathan Edwards! That was a long time ago. Dr. Whitcomb commented, “I went to see his grave in a cemetery near the Princeton University campus. I leaned down and heard him turning over!” Satan knows how to indoctrinate and focus on young hearts and minds so that they might absorb information that is contrary to God’s truth. Then these people can go out and teach others erroneous doctrines (1 Tim. 4:1).

Hitler, one of Satan’s masterpieces, did this very thing. He had concentration camps where he would take his SS troops and Gestapo agents. For many months he taught them how to systematically destroy people. They then spread out and had other extension programs all across Europe. The

result was powerful. Six million Jews were systematically destroyed. Apart from Satan's master plan, that never could have been accomplished. Satan is a great copier. He knows the master plan of Jesus. He knows the Great Commission, and has followed the strategy with the result that thousands of Satan's disciples are able to give an answer of the false hope that is within them.

What took place at Ephesus had ripples that spread far and wide. Paul's teaching and indoctrination program reached throughout Asia (Acts 19:10) and probably resulted in the establishment of the seven churches that we learn about in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, as well as the founding of the church in Colosse. Some churches were strong and some were weak, but every one of those churches was a genuine true part of the body and bride of Christ. What an amazing impact Paul had in this two-year ministry in Ephesus. Of course, Paul had helpers in his work, and we do not want to underestimate the team that he had, even those who prayed with him, supported him and helped him in every possible way.

Acts 19:11-12

Doctrine, Bible teaching and theology came first, followed by sign miracles. Remember, Paul affirmed indisputably to the Corinthians that he had done all the signs of an Apostle (2 Cor. 12:12). When it came to signs and wonders and miracles, Paul had done them all. Paul knew that the main purpose of these sign miracles was to draw attention to the speaker who was proclaiming God's truth. The spectacular miracles authenticated Paul's powerful message.

Paul's miracles spoken of here involved both **diseases** and **demons**. The miracles were twofold: 1) Diseases—"the diseases departed from them." 2) Demonism—"the evil spirits went out of them." These two mighty works are not identical. Demons are not the same as disease, even though demons can be associated with and even cause physical problems (Matt. 12:22). The Lord Jesus, in the performance of His miracles, both healed the sick and cast out demons.¹³ Today we know far more about diseases than Dr. Luke knew when he wrote the book of Acts. One of Dr. Whitcomb's sons served in a Pittsburgh hospital and was a world-renowned expert in pancreatic disease. His full-time job was to explore, analyze, and test how this disease affects some people and not others. Pancreatic disease is so deadly that by the time a person discovers the problem, it is often too late. Diseases are everywhere in this sin-cursed world.

On the other hand, demonism is not quite so easy to identify. How do you know whether a person has an evil spirit? How can you identify demon possession? Today, some of the most wonderful, marvelous, spectacular works of Satan are in the form of eloquent, highly educated, gracious speakers in church pulpits. These churches deny the basics of God's written revelation of Scripture, even denying the deity and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and his ministers are transformed as the ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14-15). These demon-guided men look good, sound good and are very impressive; yet they are Satan's masterful instruments of deception throughout the world.

¹³Today, these references to demon possession are sometimes explained as medical diseases which ignorant people of the first century attributed to demons. While demons can be closely associated with physical ailments (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; 10:1; 12:22; Mark 1:32-34; 6:12-13; Luke 4:40-41; 9:1-2), yet the Bible clearly distinguishes between demons and diseases. Demons must be cast out; diseases must be healed. Christ could do both.

Paul was doing much more than casting out demons and healing diseases. He was telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ whom he glorified. God used handkerchiefs or aprons which Paul had touched. Like the hem of Christ's robe (Luke 8:44), and Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15), God graciously reached down to the level where people lived. Paul's aprons were probably worn by him in his tentmaking shop and the handkerchiefs may have been used to wipe the sweat off his brow and were usually worn around the head. The same word is used of the "napkins" which had covered the faces of both Lazarus and Jesus (John 11:44; 20:7). Such items were handed out for people to touch in order to make them responsible for the greater light they now had. Yet all of these things are no longer valid and they do not have a part in this advanced stage of church history. God used humble objects related to what Paul used in his tentmaking business. There is nothing occult or demonic about what Paul did, as we shall see by the contrast of the Jewish exorcists in verse 13.

Why did God perform healing in this unusual way?

Ephesus was a focal point for magicians and wandering priests. The city was filled with wizards attempting to exercise power over the dark forces. God may have used such unusual means in order to show that His miraculous power was greater than the powers of darkness.¹⁴

What we read here of Paul's miracles has been imitated all across the world by false miracle workers. On one radio program a specially blessed handkerchief that had been dipped in the Jordan River was offered to listeners. The claim was made that if properly applied it would bring healing at the cost of only \$25.00. May God spare us from such charlatans and may God's people not be deceived by such false teachers who are only concerned about enriching themselves!

Millions of people today are being attracted by these so-called miracle workers. We need to understand that healing and deliverance from evil spirits was a temporary, gracious provision of God prior to the completion of the New Testament. Its purpose was to attract attention so that people could hear the message of the gospel. The Lord Jesus did the same. Why did thousands of people come to hear Jesus teach and preach? They were attracted to Him because of the sign miracles which He performed. This would include Nicodemus who said, "For no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him" (John 3:2). The miracles attracted him to Jesus so he could hear the message about being born again.

Today, our main attraction is the 66 books of God's inspired revelation containing the whole counsel of God. We have the completed, written, inscripturated revelation of God, including a book which is the capstone of it all, namely, the book of Revelation. This last book of the Bible is marvelously written. It is unoriginal in many ways because it assumes that the reader is familiar with scores of passages from the Bible which are quoted in this book. Blessed is the one who reads and understands and practices this book (Rev. 1:3)! We thank the Lord for His completed Bible and may the Lord help us to master it and teach others also until Jesus comes!

Paul was using God-provided means to accomplish something far more important than just exorcism (casting out demons) or healings from diseases. He was telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ whom he glorified constantly in his public ministry.

¹⁴*Nelson Study Bible* (1997), note under Acts 19:12.

Acts 19:13

These “vagabond Jews” were itinerant exorcists who went from place to place attempting to cast out demons. We are told by historians that Jewish exorcists were very highly admired and respected in the Roman Empire. They used all kinds of strange and complex sounding incantations, mixing in different passages from the Old Testament and other religions. These incantations were a blend of different religions which sounded very impressive, but were completely devoid of sound Biblical truth. Jesus mentioned Jewish exorcists in Matthew 12:27.

These men became frustrated. They were not as effective as they thought they could be, so they decided to switch formulas used to cast demons out of people. They attempted to cast out demons by invoking the name of Jesus: “We adjure you [earnestly urge or command you] by Jesus whom Paul preaches that you come out of him!” We are reminded of Simon in Acts 8 who paid money that he might be more effective in his deceptions of people. He thought it would be a good idea to pay money in order to use the Holy Spirit. How utterly blasphemous!

Notice that these Jewish exorcists did not actually use His proper title as “Lord Jesus” but simply “Jesus”; for they were merely engaging in an incantation. They had no real faith in Him themselves. Likewise, neither does the evil spirit in the next verse confess Him as “Lord Jesus” but simply “Jesus.”

Acts 19:14-16

There were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, who was a self-appointed chief priest.¹⁵ These sons were exorcists, and they decided to use this new “Jesus formula” on a demon-possessed man. The result was astounding. The demon, here called “the evil spirit,” answered and said, “Jesus I know [ginōskō] and Paul I know [epistamai]; but who are you?” Two different Greek words are used here for “know.” Jesus, I know Him; Paul is one I have become acquainted with and I am familiar with him. What does this mean? In Matthew 8:29 and Luke 8:30-31 we see demons coming to Jesus using the mouths and bodies of possessed people and saying things such as this: “We know who You are, You Son of God. Have you come to torment us before the time? Don’t cast us into the abyss!” According to James 2:19, the demons respect God in a certain sense and they tremble! They do not love Him, but they know all about Him and their theology is very solid as to who God is and who Jesus is. “We know who You are, You Son of God!” Yet, they do not love their Creator, nor do they turn to Him.

Demons have a certain understanding of who the Lord Jesus is, yet it is still defective. The same is true of Satan. For neither Satan nor his demons comprehend the true depth of the Theanthropic Person of Christ, else Satan would never have made the impossible attempt to tempt the Lord Jesus toward sin. One who truly understood His Person would have known His inherent and absolute impeccability. He could not sin, being absolutely holy in His deity and in His manhood, and thus in His one indissoluble, indivisible Person.

¹⁵F. F. Bruce says that if quotation marks had been invented, Luke would have used them for the phrase “Jewish Chief Priest” [*The Book of Acts*, p. 390].

In what way did they know Paul? This is an inference from the passage but seemingly a valid one: ***To the extent that we know the Lord Jesus and are faithful in proclaiming His gospel, the demons know about us also!*** The more effective we are as witnesses of Christ, the more demonic attention we will get. Someone has said, “If you really want to know the reality of the demon world, just start living wholeheartedly and unreservedly for Christ!”

Now for the big question: ***“But who are you?”*** We know Jesus and Paul, but not you! The formula which these seven sons used backfired on them. First we are told that the demon-possessed man leaped on them. “The verb ‘ephallomai’ conveys the action of leaping or springing upon something or someone. It suggests a sudden, energetic movement” (*Strong’s Lexicon*). We can almost picture in our mind this man flying through the air toward his targets. He pounced on them like a cougar or a panther. He overpowered them and prevailed against them. They were no match for this demon-empowered man. The demon-possessed man attacked them so seriously that they were wounded, had their clothes torn off and ended up fleeing for their lives, naked and injured. These evil men were totally humiliated and put to shame in the providence and purpose of God.

Acts 19:17

This incident became widely known to the Jews and Gentiles at Ephesus. Fear fell on them all. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified! This demon knew Jesus, and even recognized Paul, His spokesman! Perhaps the seven sons of Sceva went around telling everyone what the demon said to them and what the demon had done to them. Remember, a demon-possessed person can have supernatural strength, as noted in Mark 5:3-4 where a demon-possessed man could not even be bound by chains. Here in this passage one man possessed by demons completely overpowered the seven sons of Sceva.

In this passage the Lord Jesus is honored as One who is infinitely different than the mere magicians who tried to cast out demons. Paul was honored as well. He was not one of these so-called miracle workers. Instead, there was something that the supernatural world recognized about him and about the Saviour whom he preached.

Acts 19:18

In this verse we have a wonderful example of what true saving faith ought to accomplish in the heart of those who believe. They **confessed** (Rom. 10:9-10) and they **showed their deeds** (Eph. 2:10; Titus 3:8). ***Confession is faith made audible. Good works are faith made visible.*** People can see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Faith should result in action and in performance. This is the process of sanctification. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you to do and to will of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13). Notice the amazing synergism: God working in you and you are working with God. All this happens step by step as you develop Christian character and draw closer to the Lord, being changed into His likeness from one stage of glory to the next (2 Cor. 3:18). These believers demonstrated the genuineness and depth of their faith.

Acts 19:19

These believers held a book burning party, and destroyed occult books that were very valuable. Remember, books in those days, long before the printing press, had to be handwritten. Those who brought their books were those who had practiced magic. The KJV uses the expression “curious arts.” The word “curious” is used in the sense of desiring to discover what is unknown. Even today people use the occult world to try to find out what is unknown, especially in two areas: 1) what the future holds; 2) what lies beyond the grave. God condemns every attempt to learn about these realms by any means except for His Word. The Bible is the only legitimate and trustworthy source for learning about the future and for learning about the next life.

These books were part of the occult and were demon-inspired. These believers made a clean break from their unsaved, Satan-dominated life. We need to remember that we are in a spiritual battle: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). We do not often think about the demonic world and how that world influences the visible world around us. If for just five seconds God would open our eyes and show us what Satan is doing, what demons are doing, and what God is doing, we would never be the same. This actually happened hundreds of years earlier when Elisha prayed for his servant Gehazi, that the Lord would open his eyes and let him see the angelic world around him (2 Kings 6:17). Such a glimpse can change our view forever.

Ephesus was notorious for these kinds of books. They were called the *Ephesia grammata* (Ephesian writings). These were handmade and expensive. Many have been discovered. These books included all kinds of weird incantations and strange formulas that could supposedly be used to cast out demons or bring about happiness. When people visit a Chinese restaurant they generally receive a fortune cookie containing a special message. These messages are always positive. You will never find a fortune cookie message which says, “You wicked sinner, you must repent or you will perish” (Luke 13:3,5). There must be workers in some large American city who design these messages because certainly Confucius never said such things. They are designed to make you feel happy and encourage you to return to the restaurant again. “This or that good thing will happen to you; you have wonderful qualities,” etc. Similarly, people love horoscopes to learn what good things will happen to them or what kind of influences will help to make life happier and make a person prosperous. There were thousands of these kinds of things in Ephesus. They were internationally known for such magical writings. Even Shakespeare recognized Ephesus as a center of magical practice. He wrote, in reference to Ephesus:

They say this town is full of cozenage,
As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
Disguised cheaters, prating mountebank,
And many such-like liberties of sin.¹⁶

Such books were extremely valuable, worth 50,000 pieces of silver on the market in Ephesus! This

¹⁶William Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors* (Act 1, Scene ii, lines 97ff.).

amount of silver “would have taken ten laborer twenty years to earn.”¹⁷ We learn in Psalm 119:127 that God’s precious Word is worth more to us than gold! Who cares about 50,000 pieces of silver when you have the Word of God which is living and powerful and precious (Heb. 4:12)? God’s Word is able to replace these books which were absolutely false, detestable and demonic. It is far better to lose riches, than to hang onto sins and lose one’s soul.

The book burning actions of the Ephesian believers remind us of the need to make a clean break from our old sinful life now that we are new creatures in Christ. William Barclay made this comment:

They are an example to us. They made the cleanest of clean cuts, even though it meant abandoning the things that were their livelihood. It is all too true that many of us hate our sins but either we cannot leave them at all or we do so with a lingering and backward look. There are times when only the clean and final break will suffice.¹⁸

“There are plenty of pre-conversion activities which should be given up when a person is genuinely converted....believers today should ask themselves whether they had a spring-cleaning upon conversion.”¹⁹

Observe also that there was no “the end justifies the means” philosophy at work in the heart of these new believers. That is, as valuable as these occult books were, they did not reason it out that perhaps, instead of burning these evil books, they should sell them (even to the spiritual detriment of those buying them) and use the funds for a “good cause.” No, they burned all the books, taking no account of what they might have gained from selling them, but doing all for the glory of God in Christ Jesus and preventing any spiritual harm to others.

Acts 19:20

The result was that the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed. In spite of all the gloomy and tragic events recorded by Dr. Luke in the book of Acts, here and there he punctuates the message with these positive statements (compare Acts 6:7; 12:24). God’s Word was spreading in spite of difficulties and persecutions. When God’s Word is being honored and when God’s people are being faithful to the Great Commission, then God’s blessing will be evident. We also saw God greatly blessing His Word in verse 10 as all Asia was affected.

Acts 19:21

The KJV translation makes it appear that Paul had already passed through Macedonia and Achaia, but this was not the case. Paul was still in Ephesus thinking ahead about future travels. He was planning to go through Macedonia (Northern Greece where Philippi was located) and Achaia (Southern Greece where Corinth was located) before heading to Rome. The *Legacy Standard Bible*

¹⁷*Nelson Study Bible* (1997), note under Acts 19:19.

¹⁸William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 144.

¹⁹J. Anderson, *Acts*, found in the *Ritchie N.T. Commentaries*, pages 193-194.

makes this more clear: “Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’” “Spirit” is most probably a reference to Paul’s human spirit where the faculty of the mind resides.

Paul had two goals for his future travels. The first was to go to Jerusalem and the second was to go to Rome. We see a similar determination on the part of Jesus Christ in Luke 9:51 when He “set His face toward Jerusalem.” Our Lord would not be dissuaded from the path that God had set before Him. He knew exactly what was going to happen to Him, which was the very reason He had come into the world (1 Tim. 1:15). The Lord’s journey to Calvary was not easy. At Gethsemane He struggled, agonized and cried, “Not My will but Thine be done.” Jesus set His face like a flint to go to Jerusalem.

Likewise, Paul also set his face towards Jerusalem. He knew that some terrible things would happen to him there but he was not going to be dissuaded from the path he was convinced he must travel. One of the reasons for going to Jerusalem was that Paul had collected money from Gentile Christians in Galatia and Asia and other places to help the Jewish saints in the city of Jerusalem where the gospel began to be spread (Gal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25ff). Paul had seven or eight men to accompany him to deliver this money to the poor people of the church in Jerusalem, in order to show a bond between Gentiles believers and Jewish believers. That was a major purpose in his going to Jerusalem. Luke says little about this in the book of Acts because it was not part of his strategy in writing the book, but Paul makes this very clear in his epistles.

Paul also was determined to go to Rome. He said, “I **must** also see Rome.” In his mind it was absolutely necessary. He was the apostle to the Gentiles and his focus was upon the capital city of the Roman Empire. He had no idea how he would get there. It ended up being a free trip because he went as a prisoner. Dr. Whitcomb in 1944 was given a free round trip to Europe, returning in 1946 (courtesy of the Army and the Second World War²⁰).

Paul wanted to eventually go beyond Rome to Spain (Rom.15:24,28). This is the first mention of Rome in the book of Acts. Rome would be a stepping stone to Spain after he had accomplished whatever God had for him to do in Rome. Today the true Church in Spain is very weak and very small due to Catholicism and secularism. Dr. Whitcomb visited some churches in Spain and they believed that Paul did eventually arrive in Spain, though we do not have a record of this in the New Testament. Three early Church Fathers (Clement of Rome, Chrysostom and Jerome) all indicated that Paul went to Spain.²¹ If Paul did reach Spain, that was a stepping stone to the uttermost parts of the earth according to God’s great missionary blueprint found in Acts 1:8. May God help us to see the entire world as our theater of operation in the work of the gospel. We should not just be interested in our own locality but we should also have an interest and burden for every country on this planet! Dr. Whitcomb was born in China where some estimate that there are millions of Christians now living. Though China is enslaved by an authoritative government, yet God’s Word is not bound!

²⁰Dr. Whitcomb fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

²¹See <https://earlychurchhistory.org/beliefs-2/st-paul-went-to-spain/> [accessed 11/15/24].

Acts 19:22

Paul sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he stayed in Asia at Ephesus. In 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 Paul indicates why he decided to remain in Ephesus: “But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” In this chapter of Acts, we will learn about the great adversaries he had and the intense opposition that he faced.

Little did Paul know what was about to happen in Ephesus! Paul almost died. Indeed, in 1 Corinthians 15:32 Paul made the unusual statement that he fought beasts at Ephesus. Was he thrown into an amphitheater to literally fight lions or was this a symbolic statement referring to clashes with vicious unbelievers? Or could it even be referring to the riot described in this chapter? Since Paul was a Roman citizen it was unlawful for him to be thrown to the beasts, so it seems he was using the expression figuratively to describe being exposed to possible mob violence. In 2 Corinthians 1:8, Paul referred to the trouble he had in Asia, “that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.” Something terrible happened to Paul at Ephesus even though we may not know the full details. Yet, there was one thing that happened that we do know about: a citywide riot took place!

Erastus was the chamberlain or city treasurer of Corinth (Rom. 16:23). “Chamberlain” is the word “oikonomos” (compare the English word “economy”) which means “house manager, steward” or in this case “superintendent of the city’s finances.” We get the term “dispensation” from this word. Erastus was a dispensationalist in more ways than one. He was entrusted with the city’s finances and more importantly, as a believer, he was entrusted with the responsibility to manifest and exhibit God’s grace in this present age (Eph. 3:2). Erastus was a man of high station and political influence, and as such had the opportunity to be an excellent testimony before people in high places. May we shine for Christ wherever God has put us, whether high or low (Phil. 2:15).

Timothy and Erastus ministered unto Paul. We derive the word “deacon” from this Greek word translated “ministered” (KJV). A deacon ought to be a humble servant in the local assembly. Timothy and Erastus humbly served Paul, assisting him and helping him in every way they could. They also gladly followed his guidance, for in this case he sent them to Macedonia (probably to Philippi), and they gladly went.

Acts 19:23

“That way” refers to the gospel, the Christian message which centers in Jesus Christ who is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). The Christian “way” was in conflict with the craftsmen of Ephesus, and this conflict was causing a great stir. The word “stir” (KJV) means disturbance or commotion. We are told that it was not a small disturbance and therefore it was a great or major disturbance. The city was stirred up and emotions were running high. Those “of the way” were at the center of the city’s attention. People were greatly upset at the Christians in their city, fearing that their own idolatrous culture was under attack.

Acts 19:24

This verse explains why there was a major disturbance. Demetrius, a silversmith, was the instigator.

The motive was to protect their idol-making business which was being threatened by the many people who were turning to Christ. “They declared that they were jealous for the honour of Artemis; but they were more worried about their incomes.”²²

Diana of the Ephesians was a so-called goddess whose image presumably fell from heaven in the form of a meteorite which then was greatly honored and worshiped. A parallel to this is a big black stone in Mecca that supposedly fell from heaven which attracts thousands of Muslims from around the world.²³ The name of the goddess “Diana” (KJV) is the Greek word “Artemis” which is how many translations render it. Artemis was the Greek name for this goddess and Diana was the Roman name.

Diana or Artemis was a goddess of fertility. She was depicted as a woman with many breasts indicating the fertility of nature. She was grotesque in her form, indescribably awful. She was an ancient mother goddess. There were thirty-three centers all across the Roman Empire where this goddess was worshiped. She was internationally famous and respected among pagans. Every springtime they had a special week in her honor throughout the Empire. Ephesus was the center of Diana worship due to the great temple built in that city in her honor.

A great many people in Ephesus were coming to Christ and getting rid of their idols and occult books. One such famous Diana idol was made out of silver by the Ephesian craftsmen, and due to the Christians, their business was on the verge of collapse.

The term “gain” (KJV) can refer to “business” or “work.” It can also refer to the gain (profit) that comes from a business (as in Acts 16:16,19), and this is probably the meaning here. The silver shrines for Diana brought “no small gain” (KJV) which means they brought a great profit, a financial windfall.

These sacred “shrines” were probably silver replicas of the Ephesian temple, especially the inner part of the temple where there was some kind of a shrine to Diana, perhaps a statue of the goddess or perhaps a holy area containing the stone that fell from heaven. People could purchase their own miniature silver shrine, as a kind of souvenir, which they could bring to their homes as an object of worship or as a relic of veneration. Perhaps the silver replica showed Diana sitting in the temple.

The word *shrines* here denotes small portable temples, or edifices, made of silver, so as to represent the temple of Diana, and probably containing a silver image of the goddess. Such shrines would be purchased by devotees and by worshipers of the goddess, and by strangers, who would be desirous of possessing a representation of one of the seven wonders of the world.²⁴

There is a tendency, even on the part of God’s people, to turn to relics. The Israelites took the bronze

²²William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 146.

²³This sacred stone, encased in a silver frame, holds profound religious significance for Muslims around the world. Believed to have descended from heaven, the Black Stone is central to the rituals performed during Hajj and Umrah, particularly the Tawaf, where pilgrims circumambulate the Kaaba, which is part of Makkah (Mecca).

²⁴Albert Barnes, *Notes of the New Testament*, p. 281 (in the Acts section).

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 an idolatrous relic. In a similar manner today the symbol of the cross has become a mere relic to so many religious people who wear it or mount it where they hope it will provide protection, etc. 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).

Acts 19:25

These people were in a type of trade union ("Local 666") and they were distraught that they were losing their money because of these Christians who were no longer worshiping Diana. Also, the number of Christian converts kept growing. The members of this trade union met together to discuss this urgent crisis which was threatening their wealth and their livelihood.

Acts 19:26

What a testimony this is to the impact of Paul's preaching, not only in Ephesus but "throughout all Asia" (compare verse 10 where "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus"). The expression "much people" (KJV) indicates "a great multitude" (Thayer) or "a considerable number of people" (NASB). The number of people converted to Christ was considerable, enough to greatly impact this shrine-making industry. Many people received Christ as their Saviour and abandoned their idolatry. They "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). This resulted in a tremendous financial loss for this silver-making group of merchants.

How did God enable Paul to accomplish such an amazing feat? Paul persuaded great numbers of people by the faithful proclamation of the gospel. He emphasized the folly of worshiping idols or objects made by the hands of men. An example of Paul's excellent preaching to idolatrous people is found in Acts 17:22-31. Idolaters are those who have changed the truth of God into a lie, and who have worshiped and served the creature more than [rather than] the Creator (Rom. 1:25). The folly of idolatry is elaborated by the Psalmist: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not...They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them" (Psalm 115:4-8). It should be obvious that the one who makes something is superior to the thing that is made ["has not the potter authority over the clay?"—Rom. 9:21]; yet the idol-maker, who is superior, worships the lifeless idol. Dumb idols display the stupidity of those who worship them. However, Demetrius had no problem with idols so long as they brought him great profit.²⁵

²⁵Idolaters find Paul's assertion outrageous that "they are no gods which are made with hands." Yet, can there be any idea more absurd than deeming created things gods? Perhaps not; but the theory of evolution rivals this absurdity: nothing giving rise to something, non-life giving rise to life, and even life forms of the most ingenious and irreducibly complex kinds coming about by pure chance apart from any intelligent design!

Acts 19:27

These craftsmen considered the gospel message to be a huge threat to their business and to Diana worship in general. Instead of merely proclaiming that their business was in danger, they also cleverly emphasized that their religion was in danger. They appealed to the religion of their country and their Empire which they believed was greatly threatened. They wanted to reverse this trend and restore Diana to her position of preeminence.

Their business or trade was in danger of falling into disrepute with their goddess being no longer respected. They feared that Diana's great temple would be "regarded as worthless" (NASB). They worried that their revered goddess would even be "dethroned and lose her glorious magnificence" (*Amplified Bible*). This same Greek word "magnificence" was used by Peter in describing the transfiguration: "We were eyewitnesses of His **majesty**" (2 Pet. 1:16). One cannot read this verse without sensing the tremendous impact of Paul's gospel upon the people of Asia. The Diana worshippers feared that their entire religion was in great danger of collapsing. How wonderful is the impact of transformed lives!

Of all the temples of the Roman Empire, the Temple of Diana was the greatest in size. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was larger than the great Temple of Zeus in Athens and it was much larger than the Parthenon. This mammoth temple, according to Pliny (Roman author and philosopher), was 377 feet long and 180 feet wide. If you could take this ancient temple, lift it up, and place it down on an American football field, it would not fit.²⁶ It is longer than a football field and wider than a football field. This amazing temple was adorned with 127 columns of stupendous size. They were made of marble and this was the first Greek temple built entirely of marble. These immense pillars were 60 feet in height.

Antipater was a man living in Thessalonica in the days of Christ. He wrote a fascinating paragraph about the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. He believed that one of these Wonders outshone all the others:

I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, "Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on anything so grand."²⁷

So, according to Antipater, the greatest wonder of the ancient world was the Temple of Diana. It surpassed the magnificence of all the others. It was a spectacular temple. It was ultimately destroyed by the Goths in the third century A.D.

²⁶A football field is 300 feet long (not counting the end zones) and 160 feet wide.

²⁷Antipater of Sidon—*Greek Anthology* IX.58.

Acts 19:28

The speech of Demetrius had a significant impact upon the crowd. They were fired up to defend their lifeless and nonexistent goddess. In their great zeal and anger [literally, *full of rage*] towards the Christians they determined to rededicate themselves to Diana, extolling her greatness. They wisely refrained from shouting, “Our business is in danger!” Rather, they employed the old “God, Mother, and Country” routine, in response to the stupendous reality that “the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified” (Acts 19:17).

Acts 19:29

The whole city was filled with confusion (KJV); it was a situation of chaos and disorder. Things were getting out of control and going from bad to worse.

Gaius and Aristarchus were Paul’s travel companions. Aristarchus traveled with Paul on the ship to Rome as we learn in Acts 27:2 (see also Acts 20:4). Later, we find him in a prison in Rome where Paul described him as his “fellow prisoner” (Col. 4:10). Gaius is only mentioned in this one verse, although there were other men mentioned in the New Testament by this same name.²⁸ The crowd “caught” (KJV) these two men, indicating that they seized them and carried them away by force.²⁹ The word “rushed” (KJV) is used of pigs rushing down a slope into the sea, having been possessed by demons (Mark 5:13). It is also used of the angry Jewish mob rushing towards Stephen with the desire to put him to death (Acts 7:57).

The theater mentioned in this verse seated over 24,000 people and had a diameter of almost 500 feet. The theater, in many cities of the Empire, was the place where games were played and dramas were performed; however, it also served as a forum where public assemblies were held. This huge crowd rushed into this large theater with mob hysteria and with emotions running high.

Acts 19:30

Paul was about to join this crowd in order to take a stand for the Lord Jesus and perhaps preach to them. Think of the courage of Paul to endanger his life in this way. The disciples, probably Ephesian believers, sensed the danger and would not allow him to go.

Acts 19:31

Not only did the disciples prevent Paul from going into the theater, but there were also provincial officials of Asia who urged him and pleaded with him not to enter the amphitheater. The Greek term

²⁸Acts 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14; 3 John 4. Whether any of these men could be identified with the Gaius of Acts 19 is hard to determine.

²⁹The verb is sunarpazo, which is the word for “rapture” (catch or take away suddenly by force, as in 1 Thess. 4:17, with the prefix “sun” meaning “with.” These people took Paul’s companions away with them by force into the theater.

for these officials was “Asiarchs” referring to high-ranking magistrates in the Roman province of Asia. These individuals were responsible for overseeing public games and religious ceremonies. Some of these men were friendly towards Paul, and God used them to prevent Paul from entering the fray where he might have suffered much harm. There are times when a man of God must courageously face danger; there are other times when he should avoid life-threatening situations. A Spirit-led saint will know the difference. Paul was not so headstrong that he would refuse to listen to common sense and pleadings from friends who were concerned for his welfare.

Acts 19:32

The word “assembly” is the Greek word “*ekklesia*,” most often translated “church.” The church is a called-out assembly of believers. Here the term is used to describe this huge gathering in the theater in Ephesus. It refers to a called-out or gathered-out group of people for a special purpose. The usage of the word “church” no more implies that “the church in the wilderness” of the Old Testament (Acts 7:38) is to be identified with the Church of the New Testament which is Christ's Body, nor is this “church” of an unbelieving mob in Acts 19 to be identified with it!

Confusion reigned. Part of the crowd was yelling one thing and part of the crowd was yelling something else. People joined themselves to this mob, not even understanding the reason for being there. “I don’t know what this is all about, and why all these people are rushing into the theater, but I want to be a part of it!” Luke stated that the greater part of the crowd did not even know why they had come there! This statement was true, and was presented in a way that reflects Luke’s sense of humor! It is even more sad that there are those who come together on the Lord's day in a Christian "assembly" not knowing the true and central reason for doing so!

Acts 19:33

Who is Alexander? Apparently he was a representative of the unbelieving Jews who wanted the crowd to know that Judaism had nothing to do with the weird, perverted teachings of the Apostle Paul.³⁰ Paul had many active enemies among the Jews. Because of the Jewish opposition Paul had to leave the synagogue in Ephesus which is why he concentrated his efforts in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-9). Later on, some of these Jews from Asia would attempt to kill Paul in Jerusalem during the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 21:27). The unbelieving Jews pushed Alexander forward, desiring that he should speak. The message of Alexander was probably as follows: “Don’t attribute to Judaism what Paul and his followers are teaching.” “[Alexander’s] function was presumably to dissociate the regular Jewish community from the Christian troublemakers: the antisemitism of the mob, however, allowed him no voice.”³¹

³⁰It is unclear whether this is the same evil Alexander whom Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 4:14. It’s interesting that the Alexander in 2 Timothy 4:14 was a coppersmith, whereas the troublemaker Demetrius of Acts 19 was a silversmith.

³¹*The New Bible Dictionary*, article on “Alexander,” page 23 [Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962.]

Acts 19:34

These people of Ephesus did not like the Jews, whether they were Christian Jews or not.³² They would not allow Alexander to speak, but instead spent about two hours shouting and screaming on behalf of their goddess.³³ Was Diana of the Ephesians truly great? The fact is, she has totally disappeared from the human race and not one person on this planet today worships and honors Diana! She has been reduced to nothingness, a mere relic of the past. The name of Jesus remains alive today, but *no one* worships Diana (Artemis) any more! Diane worshipers have become extinct! She is not the first goddess or god who has suffered such a fate. Elijah had a great battle against another god 700 years earlier, a god named Baal. Baal was very powerful, probably more powerful in the Near East than Diana of the Ephesians ever was in the Mediterranean countries. Baal worship suffered a death blow at Mt. Carmel on that fateful day when Baal could not even answer the desperate prayers of 450 of his own prophets and dedicated servants. They were even willing to do harm to their bodies in order to get some kind of response from him. Baal had a serious problem! His main problem was that he did not exist! That is a serious disqualification for being worshiped. He did not exist; he never existed, and today he is gone! How many Baal-worshippers are there on this planet today?

We tell people this important message: Make sure that the God you worship was the One who was here at the beginning, the One who will be here at the end, and the One who is totally involved with everything in between! When earth history is finished, the Lord Jesus will still exist. He is the Alpha and the Omega!

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” They shouted this over and over again. The crowd was in a frenzy.

Idolatry has no message, but can shout for two hours at the top of its voice to make itself believe that that is true which is not true. Unbelief still can scream and shout and rant, but can say nothing constructive or informative.³⁴

Acts 19:35

The town clerk (a public scribe, a recorder) officially represented the relationship or the liaison between the city of Ephesus (the municipal government) and the Roman Empire. He was the mediator between Rome and Ephesus. This man finally stepped in and essentially said, “Stop! This is not only totally absurd and unnecessary, but also is extremely dangerous for our relationship with the Roman government.” Throughout the book of Acts, Luke makes it very clear that there was nothing illegal about Christianity, about the gospel, or about worshipping the Lord Jesus. Roman

³²Even unsaved Jews were opposed to idolatry and would not have purchased pagan idols from the silversmiths. The Babylonian Captivity had cured the Jews of their idolatry.

³³“Great is Diana of the Ephesians” may be compared to what Paul wrote to Timothy who later served in Ephesus: “Great is the Mystery of Godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16). For a lengthy and detailed study of this great mystery, see <https://middletownbiblechurch.org/dispen/mysgod.htm> [accessed 1/7/25].

³⁴August Van Ryn, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 139.

officials who investigated and took the time to look into such matters discovered that there was nothing dangerous about “the way” which would undermine the Roman government in any respect. This is one of the major apologetic themes in the book of Acts which Luke intended to make clear.

The town clerk was thus one of Luke’s heroes. He was not a believer, as far as can be determined, but he at least had a modicum of common sense and was willing to investigate things instead of just following the whims of a mindless crowd. All paganism can do against the gospel is just scream and protest loudly. They have no rational message. They have no evidence, no support and no basis for bringing a true case against these Christians.

The town clerk appeased the people. He calmed them down and quieted them, and then he spoke. He argued that the status of the city of Ephesus as the legitimate center of Diana worship was indisputable. The city’s reputation and great temple to the goddess was known far and wide. Ephesus was the guardian city for this type of worship.

Apparently the people of Ephesus were worshiping something which had supposedly fallen from Zeus, that is, from heaven or from the sky. Based on this verse it is possible that what the people were worshiping was a meteorite which had actually fallen from the sky, and they associated this rock with the worship of Diana. Perhaps they thought it resembled her image or perhaps they took this space rock and shaped it into a likeness of her image.³⁵

Acts 19:36

The verb “spoken against” (KJV) is used only in this verse. It means “undeniable.” In the mind of the town clerk, these things could not be contradicted or denied. What things? The facts mentioned in the previous verse about the city of Ephesus and its devotion to the goddess Diana. The people did not need to wildly defend Diana like a crazed mob. If she were truly a great goddess, couldn’t she defend herself? Why did her followers need to protect her name and reputation? Thus, the town clerk urged them to be calm, use restraint and to do nothing in a rash, reckless or impulsive way.

Believers can learn a lesson from this. The true God, Creator of heaven and earth, does not need His people to run rashly to His defense. Moreover, it is not our responsibility to prove that God’s Word is true. Instead, we can simply trust our faithful God and use His powerful Word which God will stand behind 100 percent. If an enemy soldier accuses you of not possessing a sharp sword, you do not need to explain to him the composition of the metal or give details as to how it was made. **Just use it!** As believers, we can stay calm and focused when among unbelievers. Let us use the sword of the Spirit, stand still, and allow God to do His work in hearts!

Acts 19:37

“These men” is a reference to the previously mentioned Gaius and Aristarchus (verse 29). These were disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and companions of Paul. “Robbers of churches” (KJV) is an unfortunate translation. It should be “robbers of temples.” Temples in the Roman Empire often served as banks where people could deposit money for safekeeping. Thus, robbers could rob a

³⁵The word “image” is in italics in the KJV indicating that it was not in the Greek text.

temple, just as a robber could rob a bank today. Some Jews were accused of being temple robbers because they hated these pagan temples and everything the temples stood for. If some Jews were involved in such a robbery, it would have been due to their rapacious and greedy goals and done under the guise of serving the Lord Jehovah. This town clerk knew about these people but he also knew about Gaius, Aristarchus and Paul. He knew that they were not temple robbers. How much did this man know about Paul and his true message? This is a fascinating question, even in view of the officials mentioned in verse 31 who protected Paul.

The town clerk also knew that these men were not blasphemers of the goddess Diana. They did not go around publicly attacking Diana. Paul's ministry of the gospel and his teaching of the Word of God certainly did not focus on the negative aspects of the contemporary religion of the day. He focused on the positive things that God had revealed. His mission was to proclaim Christ, not to speak ill of false religions. Once we know the truth, we automatically are equipped to discern the magnitude of spiritual darkness and error in contrast to what God has said in His Word. May the Lord help us to be very focused in our teaching. We do need to be aware of the evil things that are happening around us in Satan's world system. There are evil people, evil events, evil institutions, evil movements, etc. but we don't want to become obsessed with the darkness and demonism around us. Instead we should become obsessed with God and with His truth. May our focus be God's will and purpose and program and priorities. We can only concentrate on so many things at a time.

Paul and the disciples were not going around publicly attacking false religions. They were preaching the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). The truth which they taught had obvious implications with respect to false religions because the people saw how perverted the false religions were once their eyes had been opened by the light of God's truth. Therefore, they burned their books and opposed idol worship. Paul did not have to tell them to burn their books. He just taught the truth and it became obvious to his students that these books were contrary to the new life in Christ and worthy of being burned.

Acts 19:38

Finally the town clerk got down to specifics. Demetrius was the real problem and the instigator of the riot. If Demetrius and the craftsmen had a legitimate case, they could bring it before the law. The Greek term is used from which we get the word "agora." It referred to the market place which also served as a place where court proceedings could take place. They could bring their complaints to the court and make formal charges if the facts warranted such. Proper procedures must be followed. The "deputies" in charge were proconsuls, that is, Roman officials at Ephesus.

Acts 19:39

Such cases should be settled in a "lawful assembly," not by an unruly and lawless mob. The term "assembly" is *ekklesia*, often translated "church" in the New Testament. It reminds us that the basic meaning of that term is an "assembly" called out for a certain purpose. The Roman government was very committed to correct legal process. Otherwise, there would have been total chaos in the Empire. The town clerk understood this. He knew that a disorderly assembly, such as was taking place in the theater, would encourage the Roman army to come right into Ephesus and trample their streets and destroy their freedoms and their privileges. Matters such as these should be brought to the proper authorities so that the case might be settled and resolved according to the law.

The riot at Ephesus could have brought the discipline of Rome down upon the city. The Pax Romana, the peace that the Roman Empire brought to the Mediterranean world, was important to Rome. Therefore, the empire severely disciplined unruly cities. The Romans would not tolerate any kind of uprising or rebellion. Ephesus risked losing its freedom and being ruled directly by the Roman army.³⁶

Acts 19:40

The town clerk realized that they were in a dangerous situation and the city could easily get in trouble with Rome. The *New American Standard Bible* summarizes the situation: “For indeed, we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no real reason for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering.” They would be unable to give a reasonable explanation to the Roman authorities to justify such disorderly and turbulent conduct.

Acts 19:41

The town clerk dismissed the assembly. Many in the crowd did not even know why they were there in the first place! They were told to go home! Rome loved law and order. Throughout Luke’s writings (the books of Luke and Acts), Dr. Luke frequently makes it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is not in favor of His followers overthrowing the Roman government or opposing Roman law. God’s people were to pay their taxes and as Jesus taught, to render unto Caesar what belonged to Caesar. They were not to be insurrectionists. They were not to be zealots in the violent sense of that term. God never commissioned His saints to overthrow the government. Believers are to submit to God-ordained governments (Rom. 13:1-7) and they are to keep praying that God’s perfect government will arrive on earth: “Thy kingdom come!” God’s people are not to give up on God’s kingdom. It will be established on this earth in the future at God’s appointed time. Believers need to keep their focus on the things that God has told us are part of His future program. We cannot bring in the kingdom, but God can and will.

This uproar came to an end. Paul was vindicated, as was the gospel. The Roman army did not come and crush the citizens of Ephesus and the Church was not hindered or hurt in the process. God was working providentially in Acts 19 in a remarkable way.

Observations From Acts Chapter 19

In Ephesus Paul was evangelizing in a synagogue for three months, the longest time spent in a synagogue in all his travels. Also the Apostle stayed longer in Ephesus than at any other city in his missionary journeys (two years and three months according to Acts 19:8,10; three years according to Acts 20:31). His ministry had an impact throughout all Asia (Acts 19:10,17,20,26). His time in Ephesus involved evangelization, teaching disciples in the school of Tyrannus, miracles of bodily healing and the casting out of evil spirits. Paul may have stayed even longer in this city if the riot had not taken place. Paul will further describe his ministry in Ephesus in the following chapter.

³⁶*Nelson Study Bible* (1997), note under Acts 19:35-41.

Appendix 1

Speaking in Tongues at Ephesus³⁷

In Ephesus, the Apostle Paul found a group of about twelve Jewish disciples who were totally ignorant of God's new program. They were in the dark concerning the things that God was presently doing in the world. They were unaware of the dispensational change that had taken place following the cross. In fact, they knew nothing of the cross or the empty tomb! They were looking for the One who should come (verse 4), but they were ignorant that He had already come!

They also had no understanding concerning the unique and special ministry of the Spirit of God in this age (verse 2). Their hearts were right, but they lacked essential information. They were familiar with John's ministry, that great prophet who called a nation to repentance (verse 4; cf. Matthew 3:2,8) but they did not know that God's new program was to call nations to repentance (see Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30).

Consider the question asked in verse 2: "Have you received the Holy Spirit?" The same emphasis was found in Acts 10:44-47. In light of Paul's later teaching in the Epistles (1 Corinthians 12:13, etc.) the question could be restated: "Have you become members of God's unique organism, the Church? Have you been immersed into the body of Christ as a result of Spirit baptism?" The answer was negative and it became obvious that a rebaptism would be necessary. John's baptism of repentance for a nation was not sufficient. They needed the baptism which was identified with God's new program of making Christian disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Again, here in Acts 19, the emphasis is upon God's new program, the Church, whereby Israel must decrease and the nations (Gentiles) must increase (Romans 11:12). God's choice is no longer a nation, but God's choice is from among all nations (Acts 15:14), so that the living God might have a showcase of His grace (Ephesians 2:7) which He has redeemed by His blood "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9-the raptured Church). So the gift of tongues again served to signal God's movement from one nation and one tongue to all nations and all tongues.

Very little is said about tongues-speaking in Acts 19. Verse 6 states that the gift of the Spirit was accompanied by the sign-gift of tongues (cf. Acts 10:46). Prophecy (the speaking forth of the Word of God--1 Corinthians 14:3) is also mentioned in connection with tongues (verse 6). Again, tongues served no evangelistic purpose. Every indication is that tongues in 19 was essentially the same as tongues in Acts 2 and Acts 10.

³⁷The material for this Appendix is taken from Chapter 4 of *God's Gift of Tongues—The Nature, Purpose, and Duration of Tongues as Taught in the Bible*, by George W. Zeller. The complete book may be accessed at <https://middletownbiblechurch.org/tongues/tongues.htm>

Appendix 2

Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus (in the Book of Acts)-- Does this Contradict the Trinitarian Formula for Baptism in Matthew 28:19?

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5)

1. In the Great Commission, the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Christian baptism is an ordinance which is done by the authority of the Triune God, and the obedient believer is baptized in the Name of the Father (the One who planned our salvation—Eph. 1:3-5), in the Name of the Son (the One who purchased our salvation—1 Pet. 1:18-19), and in the Name of the Holy Spirit (the One who personalized our salvation—1 Cor. 6:11).
2. There are no other passages in the New Testament which specifically repeat this baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19).
3. We find in the book of Acts that believers were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (in the authority or on the authority of the Lord Jesus). See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5. This is also the implication of 1 Corinthians 1:13.
4. It should be remembered that the Son of God is ever and always in perfect harmony and perfect agreement with the Trinity of which He is a member. Hence, what is done in the name of the triune God is also done in the name of the Son. What is done in the name of the Son is also backed by the full authority of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. In either case, the person is being baptized by the authority of the living God, and this living God has revealed Himself as one God in three Persons.
5. The book of Acts never quotes the actual words of the person doing the baptism. It could be assumed that those doing the baptism used the formula set forth by our Lord in His Great Commission. Even if the one baptizing said, “I now baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus,” the Trinitarian formula would still be understood or implied because the One in whose authority they were baptizing is the same Lord Jesus who gave His Great Commission instructions in Matthew 28.
6. That the second Person of the Trinity should receive the emphasis in the book of Acts is not surprising in view of the following:
 - a. It was the Lord Jesus who originally instituted Christian baptism and gave the command (Matt. 28:19).
 - b. Baptism pictures our identification with the Lord Jesus, the God-Man (Rom. 6:3-4). Water baptism is a picture of Spirit baptism, that work of God whereby the believer is placed in Christ the moment he is saved, and thus totally identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. God the Holy Spirit did not die on the cross for our sins. Even though all three Persons of the Godhead were involved in our so-great salvation, it was the Lord Jesus who actually purchased our salvation through His own blood.
 - c. When a person is baptized, he is making it known publicly that he belongs to the Lord Jesus, the second Person of the Godhead. He is letting others know that he is now a Christian.

- d. For the writer of Acts (Luke) to repeat the entire Trinitarian formula in each verse where he discusses baptism was not necessary and could be awkward. For example in Acts 2:38:
- “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the remissions of sins... .”
- e. Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus is just another way of describing Christian baptism. We use the same terminology today. We speak of “Christian baptism,” but we don’t usually speak of “Trinity baptism” or “Baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” In Acts 19:5 the expression “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” is used to distinguish Christian baptism from the baptism of John.
5. There is no difference between the baptism of Matthew 28:19 and the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus mentioned often in Acts. When a person baptizes a new convert in the name of the Lord Jesus, in essence he is saying, “I baptize you in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who gave us the Great Commission of Matthew 28, and the One who told us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”
 6. The water baptism formula of Matt 28 (and it is a formula, the only authoritative formula in Scripture—of course, it is not merely a mechanical formula to be followed in form but to be followed from the heart) shows us that believers are baptized into the full revelation, the Christian revelation, of the Triune God. The passages in Acts do not repeat that authorized formula, but the very fact that we are baptized in, with a view to, or to (Gr. *en, epi, eis*) the authority and name of the risen Lord Jesus necessarily implies the doctrine of the Trinity as reflected in Matt. 28:19. The revelation of the Person of the Lord Jesus carries with it the revelation of the Triune Godhead. The revelation or truth of the Person of the eternal Son makes no sense apart from God as Triune.
 7. Beware of an ultradispensational approach which says that the Great Commission of Matthew 28 does not apply to the Church today. Ultradispensationalists also teach that water baptism is not for this age.
 8. One group that teaches “baptism in the name of Jesus only” is the United Pentecostal Church. This heretical group promotes the “Jesus only” heresy. They deny the doctrine of the Trinity. They teach that while God is a threefold Being—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—there is only one Person, namely Jesus. In other words, their problem goes far beyond water baptism. Their real problem is a faulty and wrong concept of *who God is*.
 9. How can people deny that Matthew 28 is for the Church today? The Lord gave this commission to His disciples. It was first fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:42) when Christian baptism first took place.
- If the baptism in Acts is different from the baptism in Matthew 28, then when did the Lord change it? When did the Lord give another commission and when did He negate the Matthew 28 commission? Where in the Bible do we find a commission in which God tells His believers to go into all the world and baptize people in the name of Jesus only?
10. According to Colossians 3:17, **everything** the believer does (including being baptized in water) should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus! And certainly whatever is done in His Name has the full approval of the Father and the Holy Spirit as well!