

## The Book of Acts - Chapter Nineteen

### VIII Acts 18:23-21:16 - The Witness in Ephesus (continues)

#### Summary to Chapter Nineteen

The last chapter saw Paul heading overland from Syrian Antioch towards Ephesus, where he had left Aquila and Priscilla the previous year. In the meantime, a gifted Alexandrian Jew named Apollos had been adequately taught by Aquila and Priscilla, and had them moved on to successfully teach in Corinth.

When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he immediately encountered a group of a dozen or so disciples who knew only the Baptism of John, so Paul instructed them in the ways of Jesus, laid hands on them and they immediately received the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying, an outward indication that the Spirit now indwelt them.

As usual, Paul went first to the synagogue, where he had been well received on his previous but brief visit. He taught effectively in the synagogue for three months, but some of the Jews became abusive and so Paul relocated in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, where he could teach daily to both Jews and Greeks.

God produced many miracles in Ephesus through Paul, especially healing the sick and driving out evil spirits, which allowed many others to believe the message and come to faith.

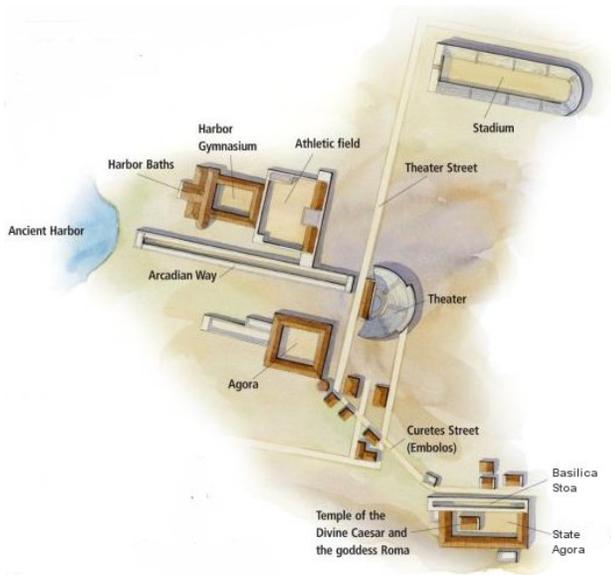
There were some Jewish exorcists who practised their mystical arts and they tried to drive out spirits in the name of Jesus and Paul. On one occasion, seven sons of Sceva tried this and the spirit ended up giving them a beating, which had a profound impact on the local people, who themselves dabbled in sorcery and witchcraft, so they came to faith as they realised only God could save them from the Devil's arts. As a result, they burnt many of their own mystical objects and books.

The silversmiths and related tradesmen made a great deal of money by crafting and selling objects, related to the goddess Artemis, to pagan worshippers, who came to Ephesus from all around the region. Paul's teaching was having an adverse affect on their business, as people turned away from idolatry to worship the one true God. One of the silversmiths, Demetrius, rounded up a group of tradesmen and other interested parties, stirred them up into a riotous mob, then went into the main theatre, protesting noisily and illegally against Paul, and the message he proclaimed. Eventually the city clerk persuaded them to disband as Paul had not broken any laws, or spoken improperly against the goddess. He advised them that if they had any complaints, the proper procedure would be to lay charges against Paul before the proconsul, as the Jews had tried to do in Corinth. He dismissed the

assembly before they came to the attention of the Roman army, who may have otherwise intervened.

## VIII.b Acts 19:1-22 - Paul in Ephesus

Ephesus was an important port city on the west coast of Asia, which boasted the temple of Artemis to the Greeks, or Diana to the Romans. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Just a few decades before Paul, Strabo called Ephesus the greatest emporium in the province of Asia Minor (Geography 12.8.15; confirmed 14.1.20-26). However, the silting up of the harbour and the ravages of earthquakes caused the abandonment of the harbour city several centuries later. Today, among the vast archæological remains, some key structures date from the actual time of the NT. The image depicts Ephesus at the time of Paul.



The wealth of some residents in Ephesus is apparent in the lavish terrace houses just off Curetes Street. Later inscriptions mention a guild of silversmiths and even give the names of specific silversmiths, including Demetrius, the silversmith mentioned in v.24. However, as in most Roman cities, many people would have been from the servant class, and others would not have claimed much wealth. By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD, after the NT period, many other monumental structures were added, including some important gymnasia and the famous Library of Celsus. Remains of the giant Byzantine Church of Mary remind us that this former pagan city later hosted an important church council, the Council of Ephesus, AD 431. The church was

probably named after Mary, the mother of Jesus, who moved to Ephesus with the apostle John, whom she had adopted in accordance with the Lord's instructions given from the Cross (John 19:26-27). John was an elder in the Ephesian church in his latter years, before being exiled to Patmos towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD (Revelation 1:9).

### VIII.b.i Acts 19:1-10 - Paul encounters disciples of John

At Ephesus, Paul led some disciples of John the Baptist to Christ (vv.1-7). His Ephesian ministry then extended throughout the entire Asian province (vv.8-10).

<sup>1</sup> While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples

#### Acts 19:1

While Apollos was at Corinth. Apollos had come to Ephesus just after Paul's first visit, then moved on to Corinth (Acts 18:27).

Interior refers to the main highway that went westward through the mountainous region from Phrygia into Asia and on to Ephesus on the coast.

Disciples here refers to followers of John the Baptist (v.4).

Paul apparently was pleased with the work Apollos had done in his absence, and was now doing in Corinth, despite the factions that started to form in the church that Paul criticises in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 <<I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul?>>. [Cephas being the apostle Peter](#).

It is inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ crucified, resurrected and glorified, not to be baptised into the Holy Spirit, as being baptised in the name of Jesus is the same thing as long as those who are baptised do accept the giving of the Holy Spirit and allow him to indwell them, teach them, guide them and convict them of the truth. Let us often consider what we have been baptised into, that we may live up to our baptism and the promises we make.

<sup>2</sup> and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

#### [Acts 19:2](#)

That they had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit indicates they had not heard of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and therefore they probably had not heard much of Jesus' life and ministry either, and certainly not of his death and resurrection. Apollos, too, had only known John's baptism when he first came to Ephesus, but also had a grounding in the works of Jesus: <<Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John>> (Acts 18:25). They had evidently relocated from Palestine to Ephesus before Jesus' own ministry began. As followers of John they would have known his message that the Messiah would bring the Spirit: <<John answered them all, "I baptise you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire>> (Luke 3:16).

<sup>3</sup> So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

<sup>4</sup> Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." <sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus.

#### [Acts 19:3-5](#)

John's baptism. They had probably been baptised by someone who themselves was not fully aware of the Gospel, such as John the Baptist's disciples in John 3:26 <<They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan – the one you testified about – well, he is baptising, and everyone is going to him" >>.

Of course, we should recognise there were many who were recipients of John's baptism, who then went on to be disciples of Jesus without undergoing a further baptism. Therefore, it is not necessary for those who were baptised and confirmed as infants under one church tradition, to undergo baptism again in another, providing they fully repent and accept in their hearts what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Having learned how Jesus had fulfilled the message of John the Baptist, these disciples of John submitted to baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus, in contrast to their former baptism of

repentance only (v.4). On baptism in the name of Jesus, and its relationship to being baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, see comments made on Acts 10:48.

<sup>6</sup> When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

#### Acts 19:6

The Holy Spirit came on them means they received the new covenant fullness and power of the Holy Spirit, something that happened to Jesus' disciples for the first time on the day of Pentecost. They had not previously known about Jesus' death and resurrection, so their earlier belief (v.2) was one of looking forward to the Messiah to come, a state similar to that of OT believers.

Their speaking in tongues and prophesying was an outward demonstration and verification of their receiving the Spirit. For a fuller understanding of the gifts of the Spirit we need to read commentaries on 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14.

<sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all.

<sup>8</sup> Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

#### Acts 19:7-9

Entered the synagogue. Paul taught in the synagogue for three months before having to relocate, showing he gave every effort and opportunity for the Jews to believe in Jesus, just as Jesus himself did: <<He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" >> (Matthew 15:24). Paul used all his powers of persuasion and reasoning to give the Jews no excuse for those who still refused to come to Christ: <<Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience>> (2 Corinthians 5:11), and: <<we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention>> (1 Thessalonians 2:2b).

Although these men were Jews and would claim to worship the God of Israel, in reality their hearts were hardened so that, when they heard that Messiah had come and was to be Lord of their lives, they suddenly would realise they could no longer be lord of their own lives, and therefore became obstinate.

The Way was a common name for describing those who were followers of Jesus. It was also called The Life. See comments made on Acts 9:1-2.

He took the disciples with him. It seems that Paul may have taken the new Jewish converts out of the synagogue to lecture hall, so they would not come under the influence of those who opposed the Gospel, and thus be dragged back into their old ways. This is what Peter probably intimated at Pentecost: <<With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" >> (Acts 2:40).

Daily discussions. Once again, Paul did not restrict his teaching and Gospel proclamation to the Sabbaths, but worked each and every day, taking every opportunity to reach as many people as would listen to him. This was something the Lord himself had taught us: <<Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working" >> (John 5:17). Jesus demonstrated this by teaching the Gospel daily and not just

once a week: <<Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him>> (Luke 19:47).

The lecture hall of Tyrannus. Some Greek manuscripts, in the Western text tradition, add that the daily lectures were held between the hours of 11:00 and 16:00, which included the hottest part of the day, when people would traditionally stop work for a midday siesta. Some may have then used this time more profitably to come and hear the word of God.

<sup>10</sup> This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

#### Acts 19:10

This went on for two years shows the great success that God was giving Paul in Ephesus, just as he had done in Corinth, although not without opposition as Paul writes: <<But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me>> (1 Corinthians 16:8-9).

The two years started after the 3 months in the synagogue, and with other teachings and activities most commentators hold that Paul spent about 3 years in Ephesus, and probably the surrounding parts of Asia as well, circa AD 52-55. Paul confirms this in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus: <<So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears>> (Acts 20:31).

That he reached all the residents who lived in the province of Asia reflects his missionary strategy of setting up in the major cities, and sending co-workers into the surrounding region to establish churches. Paul wrote First Corinthians near the end of his time at Ephesus, see comments on v.22. It is known that a number of churches were set up by those who were taught by Paul in Ephesus, as confirmed in: <<We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints – the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit>> (Colossians 1:3-8).

We have no record as to whether Paul personally travelled to other towns and villages during this time, or whether it was just those he taught that took the word inland, but we do know that many significant churches were planted around this time, some mentioned by Paul, and others by John in Revelation, e.g. Sardis, Smyrna, Thyatira, where Lydia came from before going to Philippi, Hierapolis, where the apostle Philip apparently was martyred, Colossæ, Philadelphia, Laodicea and Pergamum, and probably many more besides.

#### VIII.b.ii Acts 19:11-22 - Paul encounters false religion at Ephesus

Paul worked many miracles at Ephesus (vv.11-12), but he encountered others who pursued a false way of working miracles, including some would-be Jewish exorcists (vv.13-16), and persons who had a background of faith in magical spells (vv.17-20).

<sup>11</sup> God did extraordinary miracles through Paul,

## Acts 19:11

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. As previously in Acts, miracles opened the door for those who would then listen and receive the Gospel, and gave confirmation that God himself was working through Paul and the message he proclaimed to them.

This is the first mention of Paul using these powers to perform miracles since he commanded the evil spirit to leave the girl in Philippi (Acts 16:18). Whether he had reason to support his proclamations in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, or during his journey from Antioch to Ephesus, we are not told.

We could always claim the successes of the Gospel, without miracles in the kingdom of nature, itself such a miracle in the Kingdom of Grace, and the divine power which accompanied it, a proof of its divine origin, that no others were needed.

However, he did perform many in Corinth. Although not recorded in Acts, Paul writes of them: <<The things that mark an apostle — signs, wonders and miracles — were done among you with great perseverance>> (2 Corinthians 12:12). But these in Ephesus seem to surpass anything done before, as Luke highlights them as 'extraordinary', i.e. abilities beyond those that could normally be expected by God through the hands of Paul.

It is easy for us to become blazé about such miracles when reading the accounts of them today, but God's powers are awesome. He had first performed miracles himself: <<While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him>> (Luke 5:12-13), he had a woman healed simply by touching his garment: <<And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped>> (Luke 8:43-44), then he equipped his apostles to do likewise: <<He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness>> (Matthew 10:1). Before his death he promised that his disciples would do even greater work than he had done: <<I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father>> (John 14:12), he filled them the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: <<All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them>> (Acts 2:4), a promise that is for everyone: <<how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!>> (Luke 11:13b). Paul received the Spirit in Damascus: <<Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit">> (Acts 9:17). Now, in v.12, we see that even Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons were able to contain sufficient elements of the Holy Spirit's power for the healing miracles to continue.

<sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

## Acts 19:12

Handkerchiefs and aprons. These were not magical objects, nor should we allow a superstitious aura to surround such objects. Rather, the Holy Spirit was pleased to manifest his powerful presence so strongly through Paul that the Spirit's presence sometimes remained evident in connection with objects that Paul had touched. We saw similar manifestations

where Peter's shadow was cast upon the sick as he walked by, and they were healed as a result (Acts 5:15).

Note that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that was transmitted through these items that was the healing factor, not the items themselves, and we must not fall into the trap of worshipping sacred relics, no matter what seems to have occurred through their use.

As had happened at Samaria (Acts 8:9-13), Cyprus (Acts 13:6-11), and Philippi (Acts 16:16-18), the powerful forces of pagan magic (v.19), and religion connected to demonic activity (v.12 and v.15), were confronted by the far more powerful work of the Holy Spirit ministering through Paul. As Paul writes: <<No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons>> (1 Corinthians 10:20), and: <<For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms>> (Ephesians 6:12).

<sup>13</sup> Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."

#### Acts 19:13

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits. There are records of extensive ceremonies and spoken formulas that Jewish people, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, used to try to free themselves from the influence of evil spirits, but it is unlikely that these were very effective, since the people were astounded when Jesus was able to cast out demons with: <<authority and power>> (Luke 4:36b).

According to Josephus, there was a tradition that was wickedly attributed to Solomon or his time at least, whereby evil spirits could be cast out by superstitious practices, and there were groups of vagabond Jews who would travel around making a living out of such practices, proclaiming them to be in the name of God. Jesus had referred to such people, those who were disciples of the Pharisees, by asking: <<And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges>> (Matthew 12:27).

Once they had witnessed Paul being used by God to perform genuine miraculous healings, they started to use Jesus' and Paul's names but as the story tells, evil power is real and potent, and to misuse spiritual gifts or to dabble in arts that have not been gifted to us, is a dangerous business. We can pray for God to perform all sorts of miracles, but the actual casting out of demons can only be done by those who are instructed to do so by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. <sup>15</sup> One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" <sup>16</sup> Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

#### Acts 19:14-16

Not only was the name of Jesus important in casting out evil spirits, but so was true faith in Jesus on the part of the one uttering his name. Here, a reverse exorcism seems to have occurred, with the demon driving out the exorcists. Their nudity enhanced their humiliation and adds a hint of humour to a serious message; one that should be heeded by anyone trying to

invoke gifts they have not been given, or even asked for: <<But eagerly desire the greater gifts>> (1 Corinthians 12:31). It is noted elsewhere that Paul always drove out spirits in the name of Jesus and never in his own name, even though the spirits knew about him.

To men like these Jews or the sons of Sceva, words like these seem appropriate: <<But to the wicked, God says: "What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? You hate my instructions and cast my words behind you>> (Psalm 50:16-17).

In fact, even recognising someone as being possessed by an evil spirit takes the appropriate Spiritual gifting of discernment that most of us do not have and we should not attempt to deal with them, other than through prayer. What this passage shows is that the evil spirits know the power of Jesus and submit to him. They will submit to those who have the authority of Jesus as well, but those that have not been given that authority, and it is not clear whether it has been given to all disciples or just a select few as a specific gift, are clearly recognised by the evil spirits, who can then use their power to overcome individuals. What we do have as disciples though, is the fundamental belief in Jesus that will protect us from those powers when we are attacked, so we need not live in fear of them but just to live aware of them.

<sup>17</sup> When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour. <sup>18</sup> Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. <sup>19</sup> A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.

#### Acts 19:17-19

Burned their scrolls. The Greco-Roman world put great stock in magical incantations and spells, often collecting them into books that sold for large sums, see also comments made on Acts 13:6. Converts in Ephesus brought these relics of their pagan past and held a massive book burning.

One drachma was typically a day's wages for a labourer; therefore fifty thousand drachmas would equal approximately £4 million in today's currency, assuming the UK average £10 per hour or £19,000 pa.

What this instance also did was to uncover just how rife was the art of dabbling in the occult among the local population. What happened here frightened them, as they suddenly realised the devil has real power, and the only protection against him is Christ Jesus.

Ephesus had a particularly bad reputation for sorcery and witchcraft, in addition to idolatry. Its fame was such that the types of books used for following such arts were generally called Literæ Ephesiæ or Ephesian Literature. To have these people destroy their books as well as turn to the Lord was an amazing and noteworthy testimony to the power of Christ's Gospel.

<sup>20</sup> In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

#### Acts 19:20

Luke again emphasises the inherent power of the word of the Lord, showing that the Gospel triumphs over all demonic powers. In these summary statements, Luke continues to give glory to God and his word, rather than to any human skill, knowledge, or effort.

<sup>21</sup> After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also."

### Acts 19:21

Macedonia included the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Achaia included the church in Corinth. This verse provides an outline for the remainder of Acts, for after leaving Ephesus, Paul returned to the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, or Greece (Acts 20:1-2), and from there went to Jerusalem (Acts 21:17), and then eventually to Rome (Acts 28:14).



The Aegean Sea area map shows the route Paul would have taken during this part of his missionary journey.

I must visit Rome. Paul had confirmed his intention to visit Rome on his way to Spain: <<So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way>> (Romans 15:28). He may not have made it to Spain but: <<And so we came to Rome>> (Acts 28:14b).

<sup>22</sup> He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

### Acts 19:22

He sent, Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia. Paul apparently wrote First Corinthians during the spring time of AD54, near the end of his time in Ephesus, as alluded to in v.21 and 1 Corinthians 16:5-10. Paul sent the letter to Corinth ahead of Timothy and Erastus: <<If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am>> (1 Corinthians 16:10), and then left Ephesus some time later to go through Macedonia and eventually to Corinth himself as well, see Acts 20:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 16:5-9. Erastus was a Corinthian and is included in Paul's greetings in Romans 16:23 and 2 Timothy 4:20.

Timothy and Erastus were sent ahead of Paul's intended visit to Thessalonica and Philippi in Macedonia, to instigate a collection for the poor in Jerusalem. This would be a very successful and generous offering, which Paul wrote to the Corinthians about, trying to persuade them to match it both in terms of value and spiritual intent, see 2 Corinthians 9:1-5.

## VIII.c Acts 19:23-41 - The riot in Ephesus

The account of Paul's Ephesian ministry concludes with a riot against Paul that was provoked by a silversmith named Demetrius.

<sup>23</sup> About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way.

### Acts 19:23

The Way refers to Christianity as noted before and seen elsewhere, e.g. Acts 9:2, 19:9, 22:4, 24:14 and 24:22.

<sup>24</sup> A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen.

#### Acts 19:24

Demetrius was a skilled demagogue, or leader who seeks support by appealing to popular desires and prejudices, rather than by using rational argument. His real problem was that Paul's polemic against idolatry was hurting his business, but he added more volatile accusations that aroused civic and religious pride.

Silver shrines were replicas of the temple of Artemis that were used for home altars or as offerings to be presented to the goddess as often as daily.

Had they thought about it, they could have made just as good a business selling little silver crosses on chains!

<sup>25</sup> He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. <sup>26</sup> And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. <sup>27</sup> There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

#### Acts 19:25-27

Receive a good income shows the motivating factor is wealth and not their belief in their goddess.

His statement, man-made gods are no gods at all, really ought to have ended the debate as natural human logic surely tells us of the truth of such a statement.

Demetrius' statements were basically accurate. Paul did preach against idolatry (Acts 17:29), and people throughout the province of Asia and the world did flock to Ephesus to worship Artemis, particularly in the week-long spring festival dedicated to her. Demetrius was not wrong in linking Artemis with the civic, economic, and religious interests of the city.

<sup>28</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

#### Acts 19:28

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Civic and religious pride were the decisive factors provoking the riot.

<sup>29</sup> Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theatre.

#### Acts 19:29

The Ephesian theatre had a capacity of about 12,000 in Paul's time and was the place of assembly for the regular city business meetings. Apparently, Gaius and Aristarchus were eventually released, since Aristarchus reappears later as Paul's frequent companion, see Acts

20:4, Acts 27:2, Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24. Gaius is also referred to in Acts 20:4 and he may have been the recipient of the apostle John's third epistle (3 John 1:1).

<sup>30</sup> Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him.

#### Acts 19:30

Paul wanted to appear. As the main focus of the riot, Paul was in mortal danger, and his fellow disciples were right to hold him back. This is reminiscent of the people protecting King David: <<But the men said, "You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city" >> (2 Samuel 18:3).

<sup>31</sup> Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theatre.

#### Acts 19:31

The officials of the province, or Asiarchs in some translations, were the keepers of the imperial Roman cult in Asia; they were of high rank and were concerned about the safety of their fellow citizen Paul. Many inscriptions testify to the use of the title Asiarch during this time, e.g. Strabo, Geography 14.1.42.

<sup>32</sup> The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.

#### Acts 19:32

As with most mobs, confusion reigned, many not even knowing why they had assembled.

<sup>33</sup> The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defence before the people. <sup>34</sup> But when they realised he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

#### Acts 19:33-34

The role of the Jew Alexander is unclear. Perhaps he wished to dissociate the Jews from the Christians. But the crowd shouted him down, knowing that Jews opposed any foreign gods, and polytheistic practices in general.

This is thought by some to be Alexander the Coppersmith who caused Paul so much evil, see 2 Timothy 4:14, some say by getting him arrested for the final time a decade later, and whom Paul had handed over to Satan in 1 Timothy 1:20.

<sup>35</sup> The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven?"



An artist's impression of the Temple of Artemis

### Acts 19:35

The city clerk was the chief administrative officer of the city, the liaison between the city assembly and the Roman officials. He assured the crowd that their city's reputation was secure.

Quieted the crowd. Perhaps it was he: <<Who stilleth the roaring of the seas, The roaring of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples>> (Psalm 65:7 ASV).

Her image, or the sacred stone, which fell from heaven probably refers to a meteorite. Meteorites were associated with Artemis worship.

One of their main claims is that Artemis was not a goddess made by human hands because her image had fallen on or near Ephesus from Jupiter. Because of this superstition, a great deal of effort, time and money had been spent of setting up a magnificent temple, sanctified by the presence of this astral image, which then went to make generations of men extremely wealthy by exploiting people's superstitious fears and ignorance. Now they had a chance to turn to the true God but that would impact seriously upon the wealthy men, who ran that nation and indeed the world today, and who still exist to oppose Christ as it would dramatically change the way we live if we were all to turn to God. Such is the will of Satan to keep his place as the Prince of this World. But Jesus has clearly stated: <<Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out>> (John 12:31), and so we know who will prevail.

It is important to note that we should not spend our time speaking out against other gods or blaspheming them or their faith base. The Gospel is strong enough to stand on its own against any opposition and we just need to proclaim and defend it for what it is. Not trying to do so by criticising others of their faith, but convicting them of their error and the need to turn to God through Jesus, no matter what their previous faith or lack of it was.

<sup>36</sup> Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. <sup>37</sup> You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. <sup>38</sup> If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. <sup>39</sup> If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. <sup>40</sup> As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." <sup>41</sup> After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

### Acts 19:36-41

The courts are open. The legal means for settling disputes were the regular courts, conducted by the Roman proconsul and the scheduled meetings of the city assembly.

There are proconsuls. A proconsul, Greek anthypatos, was the head of government in a Roman province, as confirmed in Acts 13:7 and Acts 18:12. The plural here may refer to the fact that, at that time in Ephesus, they were between the reigns of two proconsuls, or the city clerk may have recognised that some in the crowd were from neighbouring cities. Alternatively, a city or province would have at least two magistrates, as we saw in Philippi, and perhaps Luke had this in view, although this seems less likely.

In danger. The crowd in the theatre, where regular assemblies were held, had the appearance of an unlawful assembly and risked bringing Roman reprisals. Luke's extensive report of the careful reasoning of the city clerk may have provided an important basis with which Christians in other cities could have defended themselves, since Luke shows here, and elsewhere in Acts, that the Gospel was, at that time, not contrary to Roman rule of law, was not disruptive of public order, and that accusations made to that effect were untrue. Once again, we have a man in authority who was more concerned with the judgement of men than the judgement of the God that he and we will one day face: <<Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment>> (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

This comparison between the city clerk and Demetrius is perhaps summed up by Solomon: <<The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools>> (Ecclesiastes 9:17).

Although the riot in Ephesus was considered significant enough for Luke to include it in Acts, it may or may not be one of the incidents that Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15:32 <<If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die">>, and 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 <<We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead>>, which seems to be either one or several experiences Paul incurred in and around Ephesus during his otherwise quite peaceful and profitable stay.

Some commentators refer to Apollonius Tyanæus presence in Ephesus at the same time, as being Paul's problem. Apollonius claimed to be the Christ and apparently attracted some following but Luke did not seem to think it important enough for even a brief reference in Acts. People like Apollonius were to be expected as Jesus had said: <<Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many>> (Mark 13:6), and it seems unlikely that such a person would have troubled Paul unduly.