



# Book of Acts

## Chapter 19

*Theme: Third missionary journey of Paul  
(Paul in Ephesus)*

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**Theme:** Third missionary journey of Paul (Paul in Ephesus)

Paul's third missionary journey began in the previous chapter at verse 23 when he left Antioch. In this chapter he retraces part of his first and second missionary journeys. Then he comes to Ephesus where he speaks daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years. Paul performs miracles which lead to the march against him led by Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths. The mob is quieted by the town clerk who urges them to appeal to the law rather than resorting to violence.<sup>1</sup>

### **Acts 19:1**

**And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,**

[Apollos] indebted to a "plain married couple."

[upper coasts] The upper and inland districts of Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 18:23).

**Clarke: Paul having passed through the upper coasts**—That is, through those parts of Asia Minor that lay eastward of Ephesus, such as Galatia, Phrygia, and probably Lycaonia and Lydia; and it is in reference to Ephesus that these are called the upper coasts.<sup>2</sup>

**Barnes: Paul having passed through the upper coasts.** The upper, or more elevated regions of Asia Minor. The writer refers here particularly to the provinces of Phrygia and Galatia, Acts 18:23. These regions were called upper, because they were situated on the high table-land in the interior of Asia Minor; while Ephesus was in the low maritime regions, and called the low country.<sup>3</sup>

**Barnes: And finding certain disciples.** Certain persons who had been baptized into John's baptism, and who had embraced John's doctrine, that the Messiah was soon to appear, Acts 19:3,4. It is very clear that they had not yet heard that he had come, or that the Holy Ghost was given. They were evidently in the same situation as Apollos. Acts 18:25.

[Ephesus] On the coast of the Aegean, Asia Minor.

[Disciples] means students, or learners, here apparently of John (Acts 19:3; but cf. Acts 18:25). The Roman world was cosmopolitan, and other Palestinian Jews also settled in Ephesus, which had a large, ancient and influential Jewish community.

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<sup>1</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:596). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

<sup>3</sup> Barnes Commentary on the New Testament

## Acts 19:2

**He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.**

“The Holy Spirit did ye receive on believing?”.

**(Romans 8:9)** *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Some say that it should read, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed."

1. The authorized translation reads "since" while the Revised Standard version reads "when."
2. Whichever reading you accept, they both infer the same thing, that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily bestowed at the time of conversion.

**Dake: [Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? ... Unto what then were ye baptized?]** These are Questions 52-53 in the Book of Acts. The next question is in Acts 19:15. Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit of sonship (Romans 8:14-16) and has Him in a measure when converted (Romans 8:9), but that is not what Paul referred to. He was asking about the Spirit baptism that John had preached (Acts 19:4 with Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:31-34; Acts 1:4-5; Acts 11:15-17). This has nothing to do with the new birth by the Spirit (John 3:1-5). It is the impartation of power for service (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:38-39; Acts 5:32). See note, <sup>□</sup> Acts 2:4. It was the common privilege to receive the "rivers of living waters" or the fullness of the Spirit of John 7:37-39 and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit of 1 Cor. 12:4-11, and still is (Mark 16:17-18; John 14:12). John's disciples could receive baptism in water, but Christ's disciples the baptism in the Holy Spirit, hence the inquiry of Paul. This was part of the gospel Apollos learned in Acts 18:26.<sup>4</sup>

**Dake: [since ye believed]** There is no definite time for this experience in connection with salvation or the new birth, as proved in note, Acts 10:46. Naturally, these 12 men had been believers and had repented of sins some 26 years before this, but like Apollos, knew only the baptism of John. They could not have received the Spirit baptism then, or at the time they believed, for this was not yet given because Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:37-39; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:33-39). The Spirit baptism is received by faith (Galatians 3:2; Galatians 3:13-14; John 7:37-39). We have to recognize that one can believe for salvation and be in ignorance of the Spirit baptism, but whatever one gets from God it is when, or after one believes (Mark 11:22-24; Matthew 17:20; Matthew 21:22). The term "after that ye believed" does not necessarily mean a time element after faith is exercised. To receive blessings "believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" any moment after faith is exercised (Mark 11:22-24). The time element is made clear even here, for when they heard they could have the Spirit baptism they believed and Paul laid his hands on them and they immediately received it (Acts 19:2-6).

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<sup>4</sup> Dake Study Bible Notes

**Dake:** [We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost] It is possible that these disciples were not present when John promised the Spirit baptism (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:13), so we have no right to question the truth of their statement. Then, too, it could be understood that they had heard but did not understand what was meant, so after 26 years, could have even forgotten that they had heard about it.

**Clarke: Have ye received the Holy Ghost**—It is likely that these were Asiatic Jews, who, having been at Jerusalem about twenty-six years before this, had heard the preaching of John, and received his baptism, believing in the coming Christ, whom John had proclaimed; but it appears that till this time they had got no farther instruction in the Christian religion. Paul, perceiving this, asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed? For it was the common privilege of the disciples of Christ to receive, not only the ordinary graces, but also the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit; and thus the disciples of Christ differed from those of John, and of all others. John baptized with water; Jesus baptized with the Holy Ghost. And to this day the genuine disciples of Christ are distinguished from all false religionists, and from nominal Christians, by being made partakers of this Spirit, which enlightens their minds, and convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment; quickens their souls, witnesses to their conscience that they are the children of God, and purifies their hearts. Those who have not received these blessings from the Holy Spirit, whatever their profession may be, know nothing better than John's baptism: good, excellent in its kind, but ineffectual to the salvation of those who live under the meridian of Christianity.

**Clarke: We have not so much as heard whether, etc.**—That is, they had not heard that there were particular gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit to be received. They could not mean that they had not heard of the Holy Spirit; for John, in his baptism, announced Christ as about to baptize with the Holy Ghost, Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; but they simply meant that they had not heard that this Spirit, in his gifts, had been given to or received by any one.

**Barnes: We have not so much as heard, etc.** This seems to be a very remarkable and strange answer. Yet we are to remember,

- (1.) that these were mere disciples of *John's* doctrine, and that his preaching related particularly to the Messiah, and not to the Holy Ghost.
- (2.) It does not even appear that they had heard that the Messiah *had* come, or had heard of Jesus of Nazareth, Acts 19:4,5.
- (3.) It is not remarkable, therefore, that they had no clear conceptions of the character and operations of the Holy Ghost. Yet,
- (4.) they were just in that state of mind, that they were willing to embrace the doctrine when it was proclaimed to them; thus showing that they were *really* under the influence of the Holy Spirit. God may often produce important changes in the hearts and lives of sinners, even where they have no clear and systematic views of religious doctrines. In all such cases, however, as in this, there will be readiness of heart to embrace the truth where it is made known.

**McGee:** You will remember that Paul had come through Ephesus on his return trip from his second missionary journey and had told them that he would come back to them if God so willed. He had not stayed in Ephesus previously and had had no ministry there. Now he returns to Ephesus, but he has been preceded there by that great preacher, Apollos. You recall that Apollos did not know anything about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ until Aquila and Priscilla had talked to him. All he had been preaching was the baptism of John, which was as far as his knowledge went. As a result of this, the people who had heard his preaching had been instructed only as far as the baptism of John and had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul detected that.

“Have ye received the Holy Ghost *since* ye believed?” is a poor translation. Both verbs *receive* and *believe*, are in the same tense. The American Standard Version translates the verse more accurately: “Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?” Paul is asking them, “When you believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?” Their response was that they had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. They had been instructed up to the baptism of John. They had not been taught about the Lord Jesus and didn’t know anything about Pentecost.<sup>5</sup>

**Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?**—rather, “Received ye the Holy Ghost when ye believed?” implying, certainly, that the one did not of necessity carry the other along with it (see on Ac 8:14–17). Why this question was asked, we cannot tell; but it was probably in consequence of something that passed between them from which the apostle was led to suspect the imperfection of their light.<sup>6</sup>

**We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost**—This cannot be the meaning, since the personality and office of the Holy Ghost, in connection with Christ, formed an especial subject of the Baptist’s teaching. Literally, the words are, “We did not even hear whether the Holy Ghost was (given)”; meaning, at the time of their baptism. That the word “given” is the right supplement, as in Jn 7:39, seems plain from the nature of the case.<sup>7</sup>

**Spurgeon:** There are even now professing Christians who know nothing of the Holy Ghost, of the spirit of repentance, of the new birth, of adoption, of holy joy, or of sanctified fellowship. What do we each one of us personally know of the Holy Spirit?

**ESV:** 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 (ch. 2), and therefore they probably had not heard much of Jesus’ life and ministry, and certainly not of his death and resurrection. (Cf. note on 18:25.) They had evidently relocated from Palestine to Ephesus before Jesus’

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<sup>5</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:597). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 19:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>7</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 19:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

own ministry began. As followers of John they would have known his message that the Messiah would bring the Spirit (Luke 3:16).<sup>8</sup>

**Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?** Apparently, there was something about these **disciples** that prompted the question from Paul; we don't have any indication that it was his custom to ask people if they had received the Holy Spirit.

**We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit:** By their reply, these Ephesian **disciples** reveal that they have very little knowledge of God's nature as revealed in Jesus. They know enough to be saved and students of Jesus (they are called **disciples**), but they didn't know much about all Jesus has done for us.

### **"We have not heard if there be any Holy Spirit"**

- A. What they are saying is that they did not know the Holy Spirit had been given.
1. The Holy Spirit is spoken of in the Old Testament, so they knew of the Holy Spirit.
  2. John had testified of the Holy Spirit. Speaking of Jesus, John said, "There is One coming after me, Who is preferred before me, for He was before me, and He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."
  3. They did not know that this had happened. That the disciples were given the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

### **Why would Paul ask this question?**

1. There no doubt seemed to be something missing in their experience.
  - a. Perhaps a spark of life and enthusiasm.
  - b. Perhaps love.
  - c. Perhaps joy.
  - d. Maybe a zeal for the things of God.
  - e. Maybe a love for the Word.
2. These are things that transpire in the life of a believer when they are baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Now there are those who object strenuously to that translation, and the Revised Version of the Bible demonstrates their objection. For the Revised Version translates this, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed?" The question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit *since* you believed?" would indicate a separate subsequent work of grace beyond initial saving faith. And because Baptist's doctrine declares that you receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon conversion and deny any further work of grace subsequent to conversion, the question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit *since* you believed?" would totally dispute that Baptist position. And so they prefer the translation, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed?" However, even that presents difficulty to their position, because it would seem to indicate that a person could believe without receiving. Otherwise, why would Paul ask it? The very question itself would

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.esvstudybible.org>

<sup>9</sup> Chuck Smith, Sermon Notes, Calvary Chapel

indicate that it was possible to be a believer and not have received that fullness of the Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

### **Acts 19:3**

**And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.**

**Their response was unto John's baptism.**

1. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance from sin.
2. John the Baptist preached "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand."
3. To be baptized unto John's baptism was to renounce sin, I am not going to live in sin any longer. There are going to be some changes in my life.
4. As John was preaching and baptizing, he said that another One was coming after him Who was mightier than he, and that He would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
5. Perhaps this small group had been in Jerusalem for the feasts at the time that John was baptizing, and had heard John's message and had been baptized by John.
6. Returning to Ephesus from the feast, they possibly heard nothing further of John, but were still seeking to live a life pleasing to God.

**[Unto what then were ye baptized]** This confirms the fact that Paul was asking them if they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, for a baptism was the subject. What baptism? Not water, for this Paul did not ask about. It was Spirit baptism that he asked them about receiving (Acts 19:2-6). This proves that the Spirit baptism John promised all his disciples (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:31-34) was really for all men, not only for the apostles. See note on Spirit baptism, Mark 6:38.

**LAN:** John's baptism was a sign of repentance from sin only, not a sign of new life in Christ. Like Apollos (Acts 18:24-26), these Ephesian believers needed further instruction on the message and ministry of Jesus Christ. They believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but they did not understand the significance of his death and resurrection or the work of the Holy Spirit. Becoming a Christian involves turning from sin (repentance) and turning to Christ (faith). These "believers" were incomplete.

In the book of Acts, believers received the Holy Spirit in a variety of ways. Usually the Holy Spirit would fill a person as soon as he or she professed faith in Christ. Here that filling happened later because these disciples' knowledge was incomplete. God was confirming to these believers, who did not initially know about the Holy Spirit, that they were a part of the church. The Holy Spirit's filling endorsed them as believers.

Pentecost was the formal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. The other outpourings in the book of Acts were God's way of uniting new believers to the church. The mark of the true church is not merely right doctrine, but right actions, the true evidence of the Holy Spirit's work.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Chuck Smith, Commentary on Acts, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA

<sup>11</sup> Life Application Bible Notes

## **Acts 19:4**

**Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.**

John's baptism: Christ and His salvation was rather expected than actually come... faith in the Risen Christ!

5 verbs:

(Singular:)

<b>Born</b> of the Spirit into the family	(John 3:6)
<b>Baptized</b> of the Spirit into the body	(2 Cor 12:13)
<b>Indwelt</b> by the Spirit, living in us	(Rom 8:9)
<b>Sealed</b> by the Spirit unto redemption	(Eph 1:13; 4:30)

(Frequent:)

<b>Filling</b> by the Spirit	(Eph 5:18)
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[**saying unto the people ...**] Paul emphasized the fact that John did announce the coming Spirit baptism upon all of Christ's followers (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:31-34). When it happened at Pentecost, men could know what John referred to, so made reference to it later to others (Acts 11:15-17; Acts 19:2-6).<sup>12</sup>

[**that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus**] Men must believe on Christ for this Spirit baptism, as they do for salvation (John 1:31-34; John 7:37-39). What we believe on Him for is what we get.

**Clarke: That they should believe on him which should come after**—John baptized them with the baptism of repentance; this was common to all the baptisms administered by the Jews to proselytes; but telling them that they should believe on him who was coming, was peculiar to John's baptism.

**Barnes: Saying unto the people.** The design of his coming was to turn the people from their sins, and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. He therefore directed their attention principally to him that was to come, John 1:15, 22-27. .

**Barnes: That is, on Christ Jesus.** These are the words of Paul, explaining what John taught. He taught them to believe in the Messiah, and that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. The argument of Paul is, that it was highly proper for them now to profess publicly that Saviour to whom John had borne such explicit testimony. "Jesus is the Messiah for whom John came to prepare the way; and as you have embraced John's doctrine, you ought now publicly to acknowledge that Redeemer by baptism in his name."

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<sup>12</sup> Dake Study Bible Notes

**Into John's baptism:** These Ephesian disciples had only a basic understanding of the Messiah Jesus and His ministry, only what could be gained through the message of John the Baptist. They were in the same place as Apollos before Aquila and Priscilla explained *the way of God more accurately* (Acts 18:24-26).

They could have received **John's baptism** from the hands of John himself; or perhaps some of John's disciples continued on in his ministry after John's death.

Some have suggested that these Ephesian disciples were not actually Christians yet. The problem in this is that they are called *disciples*, which almost always refers to Christians, genuine followers of Jesus Christ. However, it must be said that the word *disciple* does have a broader understanding and application than its most frequent usage - describing a follower of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

**Now the men were about twelve in all** reminds us that not the entire church in Ephesus had this incomplete understanding and embrace of Jesus' person and work, but only a small group.

Jesus had said to His disciples in the fourteenth chapter of John that He would pray the Father to give to them another comforter, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it sees Him not, neither knoweth Him. But you know Him, for he dwells with you and shall be in you.

### **Acts 19:5**

**When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

The experience of the men of Ephesus affords an interesting lesson. They had been mistaken, but when the truth was presented to them they accepted it gladly.

**[baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus] Dake:** They were rebaptized in water, so they could conform to Christian water baptism "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). They never had been baptized this way. They only knew the name of God, for John did not know the Son until a certain sign happened (John 1:33), so he could not have baptized except in the name of God (John 5:43). "In the name of" the Lord Jesus simply means "by the authority of" the Lord Jesus, but how He authorized is recorded in Matthew 28:19. Regarding rebaptism, Scripture bears no record of men being baptized in another name after baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity.

**When they heard *this***—not the mere words reported in Ac 19:4, but *the subject expounded* according to the tenor of those words.

**ESV:** Having learned how Jesus had fulfilled the message of John the Baptist, these disciples of John submitted to baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (in contrast to their former baptism of "repentance" only, v. 4).

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4419.htm>

“Paul recognized the fact ... that some unauthorized person—doubtless with good intent, but unauthorized nevertheless, had been along that way baptizing ‘unto John's baptism,’ but not with it, for that could only be done by a duly commissioned servant of God. The apostle therefore explained to them the baptism of John and how he had declared Christ Jesus; after they received a proper understanding of the true ordinance they rendered obedience thereto, ‘and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.’ (Acts 19:1Acts 19:2Acts 19:3Acts 19:4Acts 19:5Acts 19:6Acts 19:1-6.) When the servant of the Lord officiated in the ordinances of the gospel, the repentant believers were ‘born of water and of the Spirit,’ and the word was confirmed in them by the workings of the power of God.<sup>14</sup>

### **James E. Talmage**

“Rebaptisms recorded in scripture are few; and in every instance the existence of special circumstances justifying the action are apparent. Thus, we read of Paul baptizing certain disciples at Ephesus though they had already been baptized after the manner of John's baptism. But in this case, the apostle had reason to doubt that the baptism of which these spoke had been administered by authorized hands, or after proper preliminary education of the candidates; for when he tested the efficacy of their baptism by asking ‘Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?’ they answered him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.’ Then asked he in surprise: ‘Unto what then were ye baptized?’ and they replied: ‘Unto John's baptism.’ But Paul knew, as we know, that while John preached the baptism of repentance by water he declared that such was but preliminary to the greater baptism of the Holy Ghost, which Christ should bring. Therefore, in view of such unsatisfactory evidence concerning the validity of their baptism, Paul had baptism administered unto these twelve devout Ephesians in the name of the Lord Jesus, after which he laid his hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” (*Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981], 129.)<sup>15</sup>

### **Acts 19:6**

**And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.**

**[laid his hands upon them]** Acts 8:12-23; Acts 9:17-18; Hebrews 6:2.

**[the Holy Ghost came on them]** One must have the fullness of the Spirit himself to do this (Romans 1:11; Romans 15:29; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/Acts19.htm>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/Acts19.htm>

**[they spake with tongues]** This is what took place at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), and here, and no doubt in Acts 8:17-23. Other places speak of this subject (Isaiah 28:11; Mark 16:17; 1 Cor. 12:4-11,28-31; 1 Cor. 13:1-2; 1 Cor. 14:1-40).

**Paul then laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them.**

1. Once again we see the gift of the Holy Spirit imparted by the laying on of hands.
2. On three occasions we find the Holy Spirit imparted by the laying on of hands.
  - a. The Samaritans.
  - b. Paul himself.
  - c. Now Paul laying his hands on them.
3. In two major cases there were no laying on of hands.
  - a. The original outpouring of the Spirit.
  - b. The house of Cornelius.
4. Note that the Holy Spirit came upon them. Epi.

**The evidence, "They spoke in tongues and prophesied."**

1. These are two of the vocal gifts of the Holy Spirit.
2. Paul devotes the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians to these two gifts.
3. It does not say that they all did both, or that some spoke in tongues and others prophesied.
4. In the Old Testament the evidence of a person being filled with the Holy Spirit was the gift of prophecy.

**[prophesied]** Prophecies also came along with the Spirit baptism (Acts 2:11-21; Acts 13:1; Acts 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Cor. 13:1-4; 1 Cor. 14:1-40).

When Paul laid his hands on these disciples, they received the Holy Spirit, just as the disciples did at Pentecost, and there were outward, visible signs of the Holy Spirit's presence. This also happened when the Holy Spirit came on Gentiles (non-Jews, see Acts 10:45-47).

**ESV: 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 (see notes on 1:8; 2:4; 8:17). They had not previously known about Jesus' death and resurrection, so their earlier belief (19:2) 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.

The book of Acts is our best resource regarding the procedural practices of the ancient Church. For Paul to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands is incredibly important. It establishes this method as the standard ordinance, not just a one time event as recorded in Acts 8:17. See also Hebrews 6:2.

Where is this ordinance in modern Christianity? If we search long enough, we may be lucky enough to find it, but doubtless we will not find the Holy Ghost or true expression of the gifts of the Spirit.

(BKC [NT] p. 408)

<b>SPEAKING IN TONGUES IN ACTS</b>				
<b>PASSAGE</b>	<b>TONGUES SPEAKERS</b>	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>RELATED TO SALVATION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
<b>2:1-4</b>	The 12 Apostles and others	Unsaved Jews	After salvation	To validate ( for Jews) the fulfillment of Joel 2
<b>10:44-47</b>	Gentiles (Cornelius and his household)	Saved Jews (Peter and other) who doubted God's plan	The same time as salvation	To validate (for Jews) God's acceptance of Gentiles
<b>19:1-7</b>	About 12 Old Testament believers	Jews who needed confirmation of the message	The same time as salvation	To validate (for Jews) Paul's message

### **Acts 19:7**

**And all the men were about twelve.**

### **Acts 19:8**

**And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.**

**Clarke: Spake boldly—three months—**We have often remarked that St. Paul, in every place, made his first offers of salvation to the Jews; and it was only when they rejected it, that he turned to the Gentiles; see Acts 18:6. And the same line of conduct he pursues here: he goes to the school of Tyrannus, at least a public place, to which all might resort, when they obstinately rejected the Gospel in the synagogue.

**Disputing and persuading,** Holding conversations with them, in order to persuade them of the truth of the doctrine of Christ.

**McGee 8-10:** Paul had to leave the synagogue because there was a great deal of opposition to him. He moved his place of operation and did his speaking daily in the school of Tyrannus.

What was this school of Tyrannus? Well, it was a school that was conducted for the Ephesians. They had a siesta in the middle of the day, probably for two or three hours. Paul, I imagine, rented the space and at siesta time, in the middle of the day, he preached

the Word of God for a period of two years. As a result, the whole province of Asia heard the Word of God, both the Jews and the Greeks.

This gives us some concept of how the Word of God was growing in that day. Apparently from this vantage point the church in Colosse came into existence. You see, Paul wrote to the Colossians as he did to the Romans before he had visited them. Yet he was the founder of those churches. How could this be? By the simple fact that from the school of Tyrannus the gospel sounded forth—it went out everywhere. When the Corinthians wanted Paul to come over to them, he wrote to them, “For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:7–9). For two years the gospel sounded out so that everyone had heard it in the province of Asia. Probably the seven churches of Asia Minor came into existence through the preaching of Paul the apostle here at Ephesus. This may have been where he had his greatest ministry.

### **Acts 19:9**

**But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.**

“Spake evil of the Way” ... Rev 2:2.

“I am the Way” ... John 14:6.

**[divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way]** Three things that rebels generally do:

1. They harden themselves (Romans 9:18; Hebrews 3:8,13,15; Hebrews 4:7; 2 Cor. 2:14- 17).
2. They refuse to believe truth (Matthew 13:15).
3. They speak evil of truth (Acts 9:1; Acts 13:45; Acts 18:6).

**[separated the disciples]** This is all that could be done. Christians had to start congregations of their own. Paul spent three years here (Acts 20:31). All Asia Minor heard the Word.

**[the school of one Tyrannus]** A school of a well-known teacher of that region. Two years were spent here. Jews and Greeks still came to hear Him (Acts 19:10).

**[divers]** *tis*, Greek 5100, Strong’s *tis*; an enclitral indefinite pronoun; *some* or *any* person or object :- a (kind of), any (man, thing, thing at all), certain (thing), divers, he (every) man, one (× thing), ought, + partly, some (man, -body, -thing, -what), (+ that no-) thing, what (-soever), × wherewith, whom [-soever], whose ([-soever]).

**Clarke: When divers were hardened** When some of them were hardened; several no doubt felt the power of Divine truth, and yielded consent. Our term divers, one of the most bald in our language, has too general a meaning for this place.

Behold the effect of the word of God! It is a savour of life unto life, or death unto death, according as it is received or rejected. The twelve men mentioned above received it affectionately, and they were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; the others were hardened, for they refused to believe; and they calumniated the doctrine, and became Satan's preachers among the multitude, to prejudice them against Christ and his religion.

**Clarke: Separated the disciples**—Paul, and those converted under his ministry, had doubtless been in the habit of attending public worship in the synagogue: but, on the persecuting conduct of these Jews; he and his converts wholly withdrew from the synagogue, and took a place for themselves; and constantly afterwards held their own meetings at a school room, which they hired no doubt for the purpose.

**Clarke: The school of one Tyrannus**—For σχολη, the school, one MS. has συναγωγη, the synagogue; and, for Tyrannus, some have Tyrannios. Some have considered the original word as being an epithet, rather than the name of a person; and think that a prince or nobleman is intended, because τυραννος, tyrant, is taken in this sense: but this is a most unlikely conjecture. It appears that the person in question was a schoolmaster, and that he lent or hired his room to the apostles; and that they preached daily in it to as many, both Jews and Gentiles, as chose to attend. It is very likely that Tyrannus was a Jew, and was at least well affected to the Christian cause; for we have many proofs that individuals among them kept schools for the instruction of their youth; besides the schools or academies kept by the more celebrated rabbins. See Schoettgen and Vitringa. The school of Tyrannus might have been such a place as Exeter Hall, and such like places for public and especially for extraordinary religious meetings in London.

**Barnes: Were hardened.** When their hearts were hardened, and they became violently opposed to the gospel. When the truth made no *impression* on them. The word *harden*, as applied to the heart, is often used to denote insensibility and opposition to the gospel.

**Barnes: Separated the disciples.** Removed them from the influence and society of those who were seeking to draw them away from the faith. This is often the best way to prevent the evil influence of others. Christians, if they wish to preserve their minds calm and peaceful; if they wish to avoid the agitations of conflict, and the temptations of those who would lead them astray, may often find it necessary to withdraw from their society, and should seek the fellowship of their Christian brethren.

**Barnes: Disputing daily.** This is not a happy translation. The word used here does not of necessity denote *disputation* or *contention*, but is often used in a good sense of reasoning, Acts 17:2; 18:4,19; 24:25; or of public *preaching*, Acts 20:7,9. It is used in this sense here, and denotes that Paul taught publicly, or reasoned on the subject of religion in this place.

**BBC:** Philosophers often lectured in rented halls; this could have been a guild hall as easily as a "lecture hall" (NIV). (If the former, Tyrannus is simply the owner; if the latter, he is the customary lecturer. Public life in Ephesus, including philosophical lectures, ended by noon; so if Tyrannus lectured in the mornings Paul used it in the afternoons; if

no one else lectured there, Paul probably lectured there in the mornings, and did his manual labor afterward.) Either way, residents of Ephesus would view Paul as a philosopher or sophist (professional public speaker). Many early Greco-Roman observers thought that Christians were a religious association or club (like other such associations in antiquity), or a philosophical school that took the form of a such an association.<sup>16</sup>

**ESV: the hall of Tyrannus.** Some Greek manuscripts in the “Western text” tradition add that the daily lectures were held between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., which included the hottest part of the day, when people would take off work for a midday nap. reasoning daily.

It's interesting that again here is the reference to the Christians as "that way." It shows that it was more than just a philosophy. It was their life. It manifested itself in their entire lifestyle, as Christianity should; it should affect your entire lifestyle.

**Chuck Smith:** Now Tyrannus was a philosopher. He had a school of philosophy there. And Paul went daily and taught there in the school of Tyrannus. In Ephesus, as was the custom in those parts of the world, your business was on a split shift. You would work until eleven o'clock in the morning, and then you would close shop until five in the afternoon, at which time you would open up again. And during the part of the afternoon where it was so hot, people usually slept. They used to say that there were more people asleep at one o'clock in the afternoon than there was at one o'clock in the morning. It being so hot during the day, you just would find some shady place and try to sleep during the hot hours instead of working. And so you would work up until eleven o'clock and then you wouldn't work again until five o'clock, and there was quite a nightlife among these people.

Now Tyrannus would then probably be teaching the school until eleven o'clock and then after five. So Paul took the hours in between, when it was too hot for people to be working. And he would work making tents until eleven o'clock in the morning, and then take off his sweat band, and someone would grab it and take it and put it on a sick person, and then he would go to the school of Tyrannus and teach, and then at five o'clock go back and work again as a tentmaker. Paul did work there in Ephesus as a tentmaker to provide his own needs and those that were with him as that will be demonstrated next week in our study as you continue into the twentieth chapter of Acts.

### **Acts 19:10**

**And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**

He may have had an unrecorded visit to Corinth, since the one next recorded is twice called his third visit (2 Cor 12:14; 13:1).

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<sup>16</sup> Bible Background Commentary of the New Testament

During the close of this long stay, he wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 16:8), and possibly Galatians (Gal 1:2).

Most productive period in Paul's life...

Just as at Corinth, Paul's greatest success was after his withdrawal to a separate place of meeting (18:7-10).

Paul rented the shop from "the fifth to the tenth hour" (11 till 4); siesta pattern: leisurely meal, nap, sports...reopened until 9:30 at night...

Faithful helpers: Epaphras, Archippus, Philemon (Col 1:7; 4:12-17; Philem 23).

Erastus, Gaius, Aristarchus, Titus, Trophimus and Tychicus...assist established churches eastward: Colosse (Epaphras and Philemon), Laodicea, Hierapolis... and probably Smyrna, Thyratira, Pergamum, Philadelphia, Sardis... Rev 2 &3.

Paul worked at tentmaking (Acts 20:33-34); probably stayed with Priscilla and Aquila (1 Thess 2:9); also pastored from house to house (Acts 20:20).

**By the space of two years**—The schoolhouse of Tyrannus was his regular chapel; and it is likely that in it he taught Christianity, as Tyrannus taught languages or sciences.

**Clarke: Jews and Greeks**—For, although he ceased preaching in the synagogues of the Jews, yet they continued to hear him in the school of Tyrannus. But it is likely that Paul did not confine himself to this place, but went about through the different towns and villages; without which, how could all Asia have heard the word? By Greeks, we are to understand, not only the proselytes of the gate, but the heathens in general.

**Barnes: That dwelt in Asia.** In that province of Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the principal city. The name Asia was used sometimes to denote that single province. Acts 2:9. Ephesus was the capital; and there was, of course, a constant and large influx of people there for the purposes of commerce and worship.

**JNTC:** In Ephesus the development of opposition to the Gospel within the synagogue was relatively slow in coming—it took three months. But when it did come and grew strong enough to obstruct communication of the Gospel, Sha'ul did a strategic withdrawal to **Tyrannus's yeshivah**. The Hebrew word "*yeshivah*" comes from the word that means "sit"; it signifies a place for learning *Torah*. The Greek word so rendered, "*scholê*," which gives us English "school," means "study hall," a place where students and teachers meet; it appears as a loanword in rabbinic literature, and probably no English word comes as close to its proper meaning as "*yeshivah*"—or, alternatively, "*midrashah*" ("school, college, academy, seminary"); the Yiddish word "*shul*" ("school") would also serve.

But these Hebrew words, because they are "Jewish English" (see Section IV of the Introduction to the *JNT*), foreclose on a question worth exploring, namely, whether Sha'ul withdrew from the synagogue to a Jewish environment or a Gentile one? Or even

more strongly, was he forgetting about the Jews altogether and instead “turning to the *Goyim*” (13:46, 18:6)?

The answer to the second question is definitely No, because the text states that he continued evangelizing all who would listen **for two years; so that everyone, both Jews and Greeks ... heard the message about the Lord.** But the answer to the first depends on how one understands the social dynamics of the situation and on whether or not **Tyrannus** himself was Jewish; this will determine whether his *scholê* is properly thought of as a *yeshivah/midrashah*.

As in most of his synagogue forays, Sha’ul’s message split the congregation into those who agreed with him and those opposed (see 20:3). The latter **began hardening themselves and refusing to listen.** Then they **started defaming the Way** of life proclaimed in Sha’ul’s Gospel **before the whole synagogue.** In any given location Sha’ul normally began by evangelizing in the synagogue (13:5&N). But he also had a “Plan ‘B’ ” ready for use if the synagogue environment should become too heated for effective communication of the Gospel, whereby he would take with him prominent Jews and others whom he had won to the Messiah and move out of the synagogue to a different center that would still impact the Jewish community. I learn this from the mention of Jason in Thessalonica (17:4–8&NN) and Crispus in Corinth (18:8&N), and it suggests to me that Tyrannus is named here because he was a prominent Jew whose property Sha’ul was able to use. If Tyrannus was Jewish, his *scholê* can properly be called a *yeshivah*. On the other hand, Luke may be telling us that at this point Sha’ul shifted from a Jewish base to a non-Jewish one, as he did in Corinth, when he moved to the house of the Gentile, Titius Justus (18:7&N).

Regardless of whether Tyrannus was Jewish or a Gentile “God-fearer,” he would have been attuned to Jewish ways, since Sha’ul presumably met him in the synagogue. The Gentile scholar S. F. Hunter explores the options:

“Tyrannus may have been (1) a Greek rhetorician or (2) a Jewish rabbi.

(1) This is the common opinion, and many identify him with a certain Tyrannus, a sophist, mentioned by Suidas ....

(2) Meyer thinks that as the apostle had not passed wholly to the Gentiles, and Jews still flocked to hear him, and also that as Tyrannus is not spoken of as a proselyte, this *scholê* is the *beth Midhrash* of a Jewish rabbi. ‘Paul with his Christians withdrew from the public synagogue to the private synagogue of Tyrannus, where he and his doctrine were more secure from public annoyance.’ (Meyer *in loc.*)

(3) Another view (Overbeck) is that the expression [Tyrannus’s School] was the standing name of the place after the original owner.” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, p. 3030)

I discount “the common opinion” because it probably reflects “the common bias” of New Testament scholars against giving sufficient weight to the Jewish context of the Gospel when it was presented in the first century. I am satisfied that Tyrannus was a Jewish rabbi, and that what he had was a *yeshivah*—or, as above, a *beit-midrash* (“house of study”) or *midrashah* (same). While one should not superimpose the modern Orthodox Jewish cultural concept of *yeshivah* on the New Testament, it is reasonable to suppose that Sha’ul, who had studied with *Rabban Gamli’el* (22:3&N), used methods developed in first-century Judaism, although he presented the content of the Gospel to Gentiles in a way that transcended Jewish culture (see 11:20–23, 1C 9:20–22&NN).

It is important for modern Messianic Judaism to have available the concept of a Messianic *yeshivah* or *midrashah*. Restoring the Jewishness of the Gospel should involve presenting the eternal Gospel in a Jewish religious, cultural and social environment. While today the word “*yeshivah*,” to most Jewish people, means a school for Jewish studies, particularly *Torah*, Talmud, *halakhah*, etc., it is right for Messianic Judaism to appropriate this term and apply it to Messianic Jewish institutions of learning that relate seriously to the Jewish as well as the New Testament materials. This is one way to meet the challenge of Mt 13:52&N.<sup>17</sup>

**ESV:** Paul ministered in Ephesus for about three years (c. a.d. 52–55; see 20:31). That he reached all the residents of Asia reflects his missionary strategy of setting up in the major cities and sending coworkers into the surrounding region to establish churches. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians near the end of his time at Ephesus (see note on Acts 19:22).

### **Bruce R. McConkie**

“Paul the missionary, with zeal and devotion, continued to preach and teach, in the synagogues, in the schools of philosophy, everywhere he could gain a congregation. He did then what latter-day elders are commanded to do now:

‘Confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private; and inasmuch as ye are faithful their shame shall be made manifest.’ ‘Contend thou, therefore, morning by morning; and day after day let thy warning voice go forth; and when the night cometh let not the inhabitants of the earth slumber, because of thy speech.’

“And so, all Asia heard the word—not in the sense that each soul was taught the plan of salvation, but in that all had the opportunity to seek and find the truth if they desired it. That seven major units of the Church were established in Asia is known from the revelation received by John on Patmos. Paul's ministry undoubtedly played an important part in the establishment of these churches.”  
(*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:168.)

### **Acts 19:11**

**And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:**

[**special miracles**] Extraordinary miracles (Acts 19:11-12).

**Clarke: God wrought special miracles**— Miracles of no ordinary kind, i.e. extraordinary miracles.

**McGee:** There are different words used in the Greek which our Bible translates as miracles. Here the word for “miracle” is *dunamis* from which we get our word *dynamite*.

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<sup>17</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 19:8). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

It means “an act of power.” God wrought special powers by the hands of Paul. He is exercising the gifts of an apostle.

This was a great religious center, possibly more than Athens or any other place. The great temple of Diana was there, and the worship connected with it was satanic to the very core. Now in order to meet that kind of opposition, God granted to Paul some special powers.

**ESV: God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul.** As previously in Acts, miracles opened the door for hearing the gospel and gave confirmation that God himself was working through Paul and his message (cf. notes on 3:1–26; etc.).

Literally, the phrase **unusual miracles** could be translated, *miracles not of the ordinary kind*. Even if we should “expect” miracles, these are the unexpected sort!

### **Acts 19:12**

**So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.**

Extraordinary.           “Handkerchiefs” = sweat bands.  
                                  “Aprons”           = leather work aprons.  
                                  Symbols: cf. Moses’ rod, et al.

God wrought the miracles...

**Clarke: Handkerchiefs or aprons**— Probably the *sudaria* were a sort of handkerchiefs, which, in travelling, were always carried in the hand, for the convenience of wiping the face; and the *simikintha* were either the sashes or girdles that went about the loins. These, borrowed from the apostle, and applied to the bodies of the diseased, became the means, in the hand of God, of their restoration to health.

**Clarke: The diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them**— Here, there is a most evident distinction made between the diseases and the evil spirits: hence they were not one and the same thing.

**Barnes: So that from his body.** That is, these handkerchiefs which had been applied to his body, which he had used, or which he had touched. An instance somewhat similar to this occurs in the case of the woman who was healed by touching the hem of the Saviour's garment, Matthew 9:20-22.

**Barnes: Handkerchiefs.** The word used here is of Latin origin, and properly denotes a piece of linen with which sweat was wiped from the face; and then any piece of linen used for tying up, or containing anything. In Luke 19:20, it denotes the "napkin" in which the talent of the unprofitable servant was concealed; in John 11:44, 20:7, the "napkin" which was used to bind up the face of the dead, applied to Lazarus and to our Saviour.

**Barnes: Or aprons.** This also is a Latin word, and means, literally, a *half-girdle*-a piece of cloth which was girded round the waist to preserve the clothes of those who were engaged in any kind of work. The word *aprons* expresses the idea.

**McGee:** What were these handkerchiefs and aprons which are mentioned here? Well, actually we could call them sweat cloths. Paul used them as he worked. Remember that he was a tentmaker and this was in a warm climate. While he was working, he would be perspiring. He would use these cloths, these handkerchiefs and aprons, to wipe his brow. They were dirty. They had his perspiration from his body on them. People would come and pick up these dirty cloths and would be healed of their diseases! In that area there were the mystery religions which used white garments and emphasized that everything must be very clean and white. Everything had to be just so. It seems that God was rebuking all of that sort of thing. He used these dirty, sweaty cloths to heal people.

This reveals the special power that was granted to the apostle Paul. As far as I know, this is the only incident like this that ever took place—including the day in which we live. It is almost blasphemous for anyone to send out a little handkerchief and claim there is a power in it. Paul's handkerchief was an old sweat cloth. God used that to rebuke the heathen, pagan religions of that day. Diseases were healed and evil spirits went out of them when they picked up these dirty, sweaty cloths.

**ESV:** 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).

**ESV: handkerchiefs or aprons.** These were not magical 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 (cf. note on 5:15). As had happened at Samaria (8:9–13), Cyprus (13:6–11), and Philippi (16:16–18), the powerful forces of pagan magic (19:19) and religion connected to demonic activity (vv. 12, 15; cf. 1 Cor. 10:20; Eph. 6:12) were confronted by the far more powerful work of the Holy Spirit ministering through Paul.

**Chuck Smith:** Now, I believe that the value of these handkerchiefs was that it gave a point of contact to release faith. I think that it is important that faith be activated. Too many times we have what is classified as passive faith, but I think that is a misnomer. I don't think you can have passive faith. I think that faith is active, or else it is not faith. But, we don't always act upon our faith. And I think that it is valuable to have a point of contact where I release faith, and I think that the bringing of a handkerchief from Paul or the sweatband, as the case may be, and laying upon the sick person was a place of releasing faith. "I know that as this handkerchief is laid on me, I am going to be healed. God's going to touch me." And it gives us just a point of contact to release faith.

Now I am certain that there are many things about the power of God that we have so little understanding. God help us that we would not limit Him more by our unbelief, but we would just say, "Well listen, God can do anything." And just begin to expect God to do anything. And you know, if you'll just start expecting God to do anything, you will

find He will begin to do something. He will begin to do an awful lot in your life if you just begin to expect Him. Release your faith; turn it loose. Take the bridle off from God and let Him begin to work freely. Don't be afraid of what God might desire to do in your life. Give Him that freedom.

### **Acts 19:13**

**Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.**

[**vagabond Jews**] Roving Jews (Acts 13:6; 1 Tim. 5:13). They practiced divination (see Twelve Forbidden Practices). Josephus speaks of Solomon and others of his people in all ages, casting out demons (Antiquities, 8:2:5).

**Clarke: Certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists** Certain of the Jews who went about practicing exorcisms. Vagabond has a very bad acceptance among us; but, literally, *vagabundus* signifies a wanderer, one that has no settled place of abode. These, like all their countrymen, in all places, went about to get their bread in what way they could; making trial of every thing by which they could have the prospect of gain. Finding that Paul cast out demons through the name of Jesus, they thought, by using the same, they might produce the same effects; and, if they could, they knew it would be to them an ample source of revenue; for demoniacs abounded in the land.

**Barnes: The vagabond Jews.** Gr., Jews going about. The word *vagabond* with us is now commonly used in a bad sense, to denote a vagrant; a man who has no home; an idle, worthless fellow. The word, however, properly means one wandering from place to place, without any settled habitation, from whatever cause it may be. Here it denotes those Jews who wandered from place to place, practicing exorcism.

**Barnes: We adjure you.** We bind you by an oath; we command you as under the solemnity of an oath, Mark 5:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:27. It is a form of putting one under oath, 1 Kings 2:43, Genesis 24:37, 2 Kings 11:4, Nehemiah 13:25. (Septuagint.) That this art was practised then, or attempted, is abundantly proved from Iraeneus, Origen, and Josephus. (Ant. b. viii. chap. 2, \_ 5.) See Doddridge. The common name which was used was the incommunicable name of God, JEHOVAH, by pronouncing which, in a peculiar way, it was pretended they had the power of expelling demons.

**BBC:** Magical exorcists often invoked the names of higher spirits to cast out lower ones. According to magical theory, exorcists could coerce a deity or spirit to do their will by invoking its name. Ancient magical texts show that many exorcists were Jewish or drew on some knowledge of Judaism, and these texts include every possible permutation of vowels as guesses for pronouncing the unpronounced name of God (cf. comment on Acts 2:20-21). Some later ancient magical texts invoked the name of Jesus alongside other formulas, recognizing, as do the exorcists in this narrative, its efficacy when employed by Christians to expel demons.

These Jews traveled from town to town making a living by claiming to heal and drive out demons. Often they would recite a whole list of names in their incantation to be sure of including the right deity. Here they were trying to use Jesus' name in an effort to match Paul's power.

Although some Ephesians who knew no better may have regarded Paul as a magician, God seems to have healed them anyway to draw their attention to his message (19:11–12); but God would not tolerate unauthorized use of Jesus' name. Ephesus was widely reputed for its trade in magic and the need for exorcisms and protection against evil spirits.<sup>18</sup>

**JNTC: Jewish exorcists** (Greek *exorkistês*, used only here in the New Testament).

Josephus speaks of King Solomon's having learned "that skill which expels demons .... And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons so that they never return, and this method of cure is of great force unto this day. Indeed, I have seen a certain man of my own country, whose name was El'azar, releasing people who were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, his sons, his captains and the whole multitude of soldiers. The manner of cure was this: he put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils ...." (*Antiquities of the Jews* 8:2:5)

Exorcism of *shedim* (Hebrew, "demons") is a theme in the Talmud. In medieval Jewish literature the term "*dibbuk*" becomes commoner. There are descriptions of Jewish exorcisms dating from the present century.

Given that demons are regarded as real and not imaginary phenomena (see Mt 4:1, 24; 9:34; 11:20–21; Mk 5:11–17 and notes), it may be surprising that it is sometimes possible to use magical means, that is, demonic means, to expel them. Apparently there is some degree of order even in the demonic hierarchy, so that some demonic powers can expel other demonic powers. Nevertheless, ultimately "a house divided against itself cannot stand" (Mt 12:22–29&NN). And there are demons that do not respond to the means used by exorcists but only to prayer (Mk 9:14–29).

**Tried to make use of the name of the Lord Yeshua**, as if the name itself had magical powers. They were attempting to use the Messiah as a means to their own ends. But Yeshua himself is always the end, never the means to other ends.

**I exorcise you demons by the Yeshua that Sha'ul is proclaiming.** Obviously these exorcists, though knowing nothing about Yeshua, had noticed that those who spoke of their faith in him had power (Mk 16:20). Like Shim'on (8:19) they were power-hungry, but they did not understand that the power comes from the Holy Spirit (1:8), who is given only to those putting their trust in Yeshua as Messiah, Lord and Savior. When used by those with such trust, his name is powerful in expelling demons (3:6, 9:34; Mk 16:17–18).

Compare this interesting story from the Jerusalem Talmud; it probably took place before 130 C.E.:

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<sup>18</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Ac 19:13). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

“The case of Rabbi El’azar ben-Damah, whom a serpent bit. There came in Ya’akov, a man of K’far-Sama, to cure him in the name of Yeshua ben-Pandira; but Rabbi Ishmael did not allow it. He said, ‘You are not permitted, Ben-Damah.’ Ben-Damah replied, ‘I will bring you proof that he may heal me.’ But before he had finished bringing proof, he died. Rabbi Ishmael said, ‘Happy are you, Ben-Damah, for you have departed in peace and have not broken through the ordinances of the wise; for on everyone who breaks through the fence of the wise, punishment comes at last, as it is written, “Whoever breaks down a fence, a serpent will bite him” (Ecclesiastes 10:8).’ The serpent only bit him that a serpent might not bite him in the future. And what could Ben-Damah have said? ‘ ... Which, if a person do, he shall live by them’ (that is, not die in them; Leviticus 18:5).” (Shabbat 14d)

Yeshua ben-Pandira is Yeshua from Natzeret (compare Tosefta Chullin 2:24 with Babylonian Talmud ‘Avodah Zarah 16b–17a). The 5th–6th century Jewish anti-Gospel, *Toledot-Yeshu*, is clearer about this: it presents “Yeshu” (see Mt 1:21N) as the illegitimate son of Miryam and a Roman soldier named Pandira.

Obviously Ya’akov from K’far-Sama (or K’far-Sechanyah; see below), whose role in the story is passive, was a Messianic Jew. What is important in connection with our verse is that it is taken for granted that Ya’akov would in fact have healed Rabbi El’azar Ben-Damah in Yeshua’s name. That is, if a non-Messianic Jew does not allow a colleague’s life to be saved through the power Yeshua gives his followers, he implicitly acknowledges that the power exists.

A variant of this story told in Babylonian Talmud is even more explicit about this: “A man is to have no dealings with the *minim* nor may he be cured by them, even to gain one hour of life. The case of Ben-Damah, Rabbi Ishmael’s sister’s son, whom a serpent bit. There came Ya’akov the *min* of K’far-Sechanyah to cure him ....” (‘Avodah Zarah 27b)

Later the text comments on the quotation from Ecclesiastes, “It is different in regard to *minut* [the heresy of the *minim*, i.e., in this case, Messianic Judaism], which bites a man, so that he comes to be bitten afterwards.”

Thus the last half of the story means this: Ben-Damah did not transgress the ordinances of the rabbis, he did not break down the “fence” around the *Torah*, by allowing a heretic (a Messianic Jew) to minister to him. So the literal serpent which bit him and caused his death saved him from being bitten by the figurative serpent of heresy and from suffering in the *olam haba* punishment worse than death.

This same story appears in three additional places in rabbinic literature: Tosefta Chullin 2:22–23; Jerusalem Talmud ‘Avodah Zarah 40d–41a; and Midrash Rabbah Ecclesiastes 1:8.<sup>19</sup>

**Spurgeon:** Wretched is that man who uses the name of Jesus for his won ends, knowing nothing of its power in his own heart. It is to be feared that many do this even now.

**ESV: itinerant Jewish exorcists.** There are records of extensive ceremonies and spoken formulas that Jewish people in the first century used to try to free themselves from the influence of evil spirits, but it is unlikely that these were very effective, since the people

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<sup>19</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 19:13). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

were astounded when Jesus was able to cast out demons with “authority and power” (Luke 4:36).

There are many people - many churchgoers - who will perish in Hell because they have no personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They only know “the Jesus the pastor preaches” or of “the Jesus my spouse believes in” instead of the Jesus of their own salvation.

**Chuck Smith:** Now, Ephesus was a place of great superstition. There were all kinds of magical little emulates that you could purchase there in Ephesus; good luck charms. And the people believed a lot in these things. And there were certain Jews who said that certain writings of the scripture had magical value to help you or to protect you in certain things. So they were wrapping up these little portions of the scriptures and selling them to people. If you wanted to be wealthy then you could buy this little magical portion of scripture, and carry it on you, and wealth would start to come to you. Or if you wanted, you know, different things, they had little scriptures for all kinds of things. They had their little shops and you could buy these little magical charms, which in that case, with these exorcists Jews, were portions of scripture that were supposed to do all kinds of magical things.

### **Acts 19:14**

**And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so.**

Grammar implies only two of the seven.

[**Sceva**] A member of the Jewish council at Ephesus, and chief of the priests there.

**BBC:** “**Sceva**” is a Latin name; as loosely as Jerusalem Jews used “high priest” for the highest members of the priestly aristocracy, it is likely that Sceva simply appropriated the title for himself. Inscriptions and texts testify to other irregularities in Jewish priestly claims outside Palestine. Because Jewish chief priests would be thought to have access to the sacred name (Acts 19:13) and hidden names, especially of the supreme god, were thought to wield great power in magical circles, Sceva is probably highly reputed in those circles. “Sons” could mean they were part of Sceva’s guild, although it is probably meant literally.

### **Acts 19:15**

**And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?**

“Jesus I know”: deep, instinctive, innate knowledge.

“Paul I am acquainted with...”

(Note personality of Satan’s forces...they are personages that are sentient, knowledgeable, and very resourceful.)

4th Satanic encounter:

Simon Magus  
Elymas/ Bar Jesus  
Philippian Pythoness  
Cf. Matthew 12:22-23

**[but who are ye?]** This is question 54 in the Book of Acts. The next question is in Acts 19:35.

**Clarke: Jesus I know, and Paul I know**—In the answer of the demoniac, the verb in varied: I acknowledge Jesus, and am acquainted with Paul; but of whom are ye? Ye belong to neither; ye have no authority. And he soon gave them full proof of this.

**BBC:** Ancient literature indicates that demons were typically unimpressed with orders from those who had no power over them, although they feared God and could be controlled by the manipulation of spirits more powerful than themselves (who apparently liked the influence this gave them with the magicians).

### **Acts 19:16**

**And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.**

**[overcame]** Greek: *katakuriuo* (GSN-2634), overpowered (Acts 19:16; Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42; 1 Peter 5:3).

**Clarke: And the man in whom the evil spirit was, etc.**—Thus we find that one man was more powerful than these seven brothers; so that he stripped them of their upper garments, and beat and wounded the whole! Was not this a proof that he derived his strength from the evil spirit that dwelt in him?

**Spurgeon:** The evil spirit laughs at those whom God has not sent forth into the ministry; they may use pious words, but they are destitute of divine power, and will surely be the sport of hell.

**ESV:** 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” occurred, with the demon driving out the exorcists. Their nudity enhanced their humiliation.

### **Acts 19:17**

**And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.**

**[the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified]** This is always the result of miracles in the name of Jesus (Mark 16:17-20).

**Clarke: The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified**—They saw that there was a sovereign power in the name of Jesus, which could not be imitated by these lying exorcists: they therefore revered this name, and despised those pretenders. Exorcisms or adjurations of evil spirits were very frequent in the primitive Church: the name of JESUS was that alone which was used. The primitive fathers speak strong and decisive words concerning the power of this name; and how demons were tormented and expelled by it, not only from individuals, but from the temples themselves. Exorcists formed a distinct class in the Church; hence we read of presbyters, deacons, exorcists, lecturers, and door-keepers. The adjuration was commonly used over the catechumens, before they were admitted to baptism. Gregory of Nazianzen, and Cyril of Jerusalem speak much of this rite.

The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Acquired increasing honour. The transaction showed that the miracles performed in the name of the Lord Jesus, by Paul, were real, and were wrought in attestation of the truth of the doctrine which he taught. Impostors could not work such miracles; and they who pretended to be able to do it only exposed themselves to the rage of the evil spirits. It was thus shown that there was a real, vital difference between Paul and these impostors; and their failure only served to extend his reputation and the power of the gospel.

**McGee:** You can see the effect that this had. It caused the name of the Lord Jesus to be spread through that entire pagan city. Ephesus was a great city, and it was shaken by this.

The miracles which Paul and the other apostles performed were not the type of thing that one hears about today. For many years there have been stories of miracles being performed in Los Angeles and in Southern California, but they made no dent or impression on this great pagan city. The miracles of Paul shook Ephesus to its very foundation. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified through them.

### **Acts 19:18**

**And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.**

**Barnes: Their deeds.** Their actions; their evil course of life. Their deeds of iniquity in their former state. The direct reference here is to the magical arts which had been used, but the word may also be designed to denote iniquity in general. They who make a profession of religion will be willing to confess their transgressions. And no man can have evidence that he is truly renewed who is not willing to confess as well as to forsake his sins, Romans 10:10, Proverbs 28:13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy."

**BBC:** Despite the popularity of Jewish magicians, most prominent Jewish teachers officially condemned magic. When people recognize that Paul's Jesus cannot be manipulated like lower spirits, they understand that he is a servant of God and not a mere magician. "Confessing practices" (NASB, NRSV) can also be translated "divulging spells," an activity which was believed to deprive the spells of their power.

**LAN:** Ephesus was a center for black magic and other occult practices. The people cooked up magical formulas to give them wealth, happiness, and success in marriage. Superstition and sorcery were commonplace. God clearly forbids such practices (Deut. 18:9-13). You cannot be a believer and hold on to the occult, black magic, or sorcery. Once you begin to dabble in these areas, it is extremely easy to become obsessed by them because Satan is very powerful. But God's power is even greater (1 John 4:4; Rev. 20:10). If you are mixed up in the occult, learn a lesson from the Ephesians and get rid of anything that could keep you trapped in such practices.

### **Acts 19:19**

**Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.**

The point is clearly what they brought were their artifacts and books and such of the occult; these were weapons of Satan's warfare.

"Entries" are no laughing matter: Ouiji boards, horoscopes, etc.

**[curious arts]** Greek: *periergos* (GSN-4021), practicing magic (Acts 19:19); a busybody (1 Tim. 5:13). Here the idea is that of pretending by incantations to raise the dead, coerce spirits to reveal the unknown, foretell events, heal, inflict diseases, counteract evil by amulets of charms, interpret dreams, calculate sex of children before birth, and foretell by the planets the daily life. This sounds like the 20th century. Many confessed and showed the deception of their deeds of pretending supernatural skill in these things (Acts 19:18). They made known their deceptions. The books that taught these so-called sciences and how to do these things were burned (Luke 12:29).

**Clarke: Which used curious arts** From the use of this word in the Greek writers, we know that it signified magical arts, sorceries, incantations, etc. Ephesus abounded with these. Dio Cassius, speaking of the Emperor Adrian, says, "Adrian was exceedingly addicted to curious arts, and practised divination and magic." These practices prevailed in all nations of the earth.

**Clarke: Brought their books together** Ephesian characters, are celebrated in antiquity; they appear to have been amulets, inscribed with strange characters, which were carried about the body for the purpose of curing diseases, expelling demons, and preserving from evils of different kinds. The books brought together on this occasion were such as taught

the science, manner of formation, use, etc., of these charms. When it is said they brought their books together, we are to understand the books which treated of these curious arts; such as Ephesian characters.

**Clarke: And burned them before all**—These must have been thoroughly convinced of the truth of Christianity, and of the unlawfulness of their own arts.

**[fifty thousand pieces of silver]** At \$2.50 each, this would be \$125,000.

**Barnes: Curious arts.** Arts or practices requiring *skill, address, cunning*. The word used here denotes, properly, those things that require care or skill; and was thus applied to the arts of magic and jugglery, and sleight of hand, that were practised so extensively in eastern countries. That such arts were practised at Ephesus is well known. The *Ephesian letters*, by which incantations and charms were supposed to be produced, were much celebrated. They seem to have consisted of certain combinations of letters or words, which, by being pronounced with certain intonations of voice, were believed to be effectual in expelling diseases or evil spirits; or which, by being written on parchment and worn, were supposed to operate as *amulets*, or charms, to guard from evil spirits or from danger. Thus Plutarch (Sympos 7) says, "The magicians compel those who are possessed with a demon to recite and pronounce *the Ephesian letters*, in a certain order, by themselves." Thus Clemens Alex. (Strom. ii.) says, "Androcydes, a Pythagorean, says that the letters which are called Ephesian, and which are so celebrated, are symbols," etc. Erasmus says, (Adagg. Cent. 2,) that there were certain marks and magical words among the Ephesians, by using which they succeeded in every undertaking. Eustha. ad Homer. Odys. t, says, "that those letters were incantations which Croesus used when on the funeral pile, and which greatly befriended him." He adds, that in the war between the Milesians and Ephesians, the latter were thirteen times saved from ruin by the use of these letters. See Grotius and Kuinel *in loco*.

**Barnes: Brought their books.** Books which explained the arts; or which contained the magical forms and incantations—perhaps pieces of parchment, on which were written the letters which were to be used in the incantations and charms.

**Barnes: And burned them before all men.** Publicly. Their arts and offences had been public, and they sought now to *undo* the evil, as much as lay in their power, as extensively as they had done it.

**Barnes: And they counted.** The price was estimated. By whom this was done does not appear. Probably it was not done by those who had been engaged in this business, and who had suffered the loss, but by the people, who were amazed at the sacrifice, and who were astonished at their folly in thus destroying their own property.

**Barnes: Fifty thousand pieces of silver.** What coin the word here translated silver denotes, it is impossible to tell; and consequently the precise value of this sacrifice cannot be ascertained. If it refers to the Jewish *shekel*, the sum would be 25,000 dollars, [or 5,420,] as the shekel was worth about half a dollar. If it refers to Grecian or Roman

coin-which is much more probable, as this was a heathen country, where the Jewish coin would not probably be much used-the value would be much less. Probably, however, it refers to the Attic *drachm*, which was a silver coin worth about 9d. sterling; and then the value would be about 8,500 dollars, [or 1,875.] The precise value is not material. It was a large sum; and it is recorded to show that Christianity had power to induce men to forsake arts that were most lucrative, and to destroy the means of extending and perpetuating those arts, however valuable in a pecuniary point of view they might be. We are to remember, however, that this was not the *intrinsic* value of these books, but only their value *as* books of incantations. In themselves they might have been of very little worth. *The universal prevalence of Christianity would make much that is now esteemed valuable property utterly worthless*-as, e.g., all that is used in gambling, in fraud, in counterfeiting, in distilling ardent spirits for drink, in the slave-trade, and in attempts to impose on and defraud mankind. (++) "Counted" "Computed"

**BBC:** Magical papyri were rolled up in small cylinders or locketts used as amulets around the neck; Luke's term "books" or "scrolls" (NIV) probably refers to these magical papyri. These magical incantations were so common in Ephesus that rolls of these formulas are called *Ephesia grammata*, or Ephesian writings, in other Greco-Roman literature. Books were commonly burned in antiquity to repudiate their contents (in the Old Testament, cf. analogously 1 Chron. 14:12). The total price of what is burned comes out to about fifty thousand days' wages for an average worker.

**ESV:** The Greco-Roman world put great stock in magical incantations and spells, often collecting them into books that sold for large sums (see note on 13:6). Converts in Ephesus brought these relics of their pagan past and held a massive book burning. Pieces of silver probably refers to the Greek *drachma*, which represented a laborer's average daily wage. At \$15 (U.S.) per hour, or \$120 per day, 50,000 *drachmas* would equal approximately \$6 million in today's currency.

### **Acts 19:20**

**So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.**

Weapons of Satan's warfare. Human beings not easily invaded; requires "entries."

**Barnes: So mightily.** So powerfully. It had such efficacy and power in this wicked city. The power must have been mighty that would thus make them willing, not only to cease to practise imposition, but to give up all hopes of future gains, and to destroy their property.

**ESV:** Luke again emphasizes 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.

## **Acts 19:21**

**After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.**

Vastness of Apostle's plans...

Paul intensely conscious of needs of believers in Judea (1 Cor 16:1-9; 2 Cor 9:1; Rom 15:25).

**Barnes:** After these things were ended. After the gospel was firmly established at Ephesus, so that his presence was no longer necessary.

**[purposed in the spirit]** He firmly resolved in his spirit or mind (2 Cor. 2:11) that he would go back to Jerusalem and then see Rome. Paul must have sensed in his soul while in prayer and by the Holy Spirit fullness the future that awaited him.

**Clarke: Paul purposed in the spirit, etc.**—Previously to this he appears to have concerted a journey to Macedonia, and a visit to Corinth, the capital of Achaia, where he seems to have spent a considerable time, probably the whole winter of A.D. 58; see 1 Corinthians 16:5, 6; and afterwards to go to Jerusalem; but it is likely that he did not leave Ephesus till after pentecost, A.D. 59. (1 Corinthians 16:8) And he resolved, if possible, to see Rome, which had been the object of his wishes for a considerable time. See Romans 1:10, 13; 16:23.

It is generally believed that, during this period, while at Ephesus, he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians. He had heard that some strange disorders had entered into that Church:—

1. That there were divisions among them; some extolling Paul, beyond all others; some, Peter; others, Apollos.
2. He had learned from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, whom he saw at Ephesus, 1 Corinthians 16:17; 7:1, that several abuses had crept into their religious assemblies.
3. That even the Christians went to law with each other, and that before the heathens. And,
4. That a person professing Christianity in that city, had formed a matrimonial contract with his step-mother. It was to remedy those disorders that he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, in which he strongly reprehends all the above evils.

This verse sets the tone for the remainder of the book. Paul's sights were now set on Rome (via Jerusalem) with the ultimate goal of reaching Spain (Rom. 1:15; 15:22-24). Luke made no reference to Spain because one of his purposes in writing Acts was to trace the spread of the gospel up to Paul's being in Rome, center of the Roman world. Several have observed how Luke's Gospel focuses *in* on Jerusalem, whereas Acts emphasizes the

message going *out* from Jerusalem to Rome. These two cities seem to be the focal points of Luke-Acts.<sup>20</sup>

**ESV: 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, 20:1–2) and from there went to Jerusalem (21:17) and then eventually to Rome (28:14).

### **Acts 19:22**

**So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.**

[Erastus] Romans 16:23; 2 Tim. 4:20.

**Barnes: And Erastus.** Erastus was chamberlain of Corinth, (Romans 16:23,) or, more properly, the *treasurer* of the city, Romans 16:23; and he was, therefore, a very proper person to be sent with Timothy, for the purpose of making the collection for the poor at Jerusalem. Paul had wisdom enough to employ a man accustomed to monied transactions in making a collection. On this collection his heart was intent, and he afterwards went up with it to Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8 2 Corinthians 9.

**So he sent into Macedonia**—He desired Timothy to go as far as Corinth, 1 Corinthians 4:18, and after that to return to him at Ephesus, 1 Corinthians 16:11; but he himself continued in Asia some time longer; probably to make collections for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Erastus, mentioned here for the first time, appears to have been the chamberlain, either of Ephesus or Corinth; see Romans 16:23. He was one of St. Paul’s companions, and is mentioned as being left by the apostle at Corinth, 2 Timothy 4:20.

**McGee:** This is the time that he wrote to the Corinthians. Apparently Timothy and Erastus took the letter to deliver it. Although it was addressed to the Corinthians, the letter would reach the people in Macedonia, which would include Philippi and Thessalonica, and also the churches in Achaia, which would include Athens and Corinth. It was in this letter that Paul wrote that a great and effectual door was open for him in Ephesus but that there were many adversaries. We can see now that the adversaries were satanic. This was a center of pagan religion and of Satan worship. The Satan worship we see today is not something new at all.

**ESV: having sent into Macedonia . . . Timothy and Erastus.** Paul apparently wrote 1 Corinthians during the springtime, near the end of his time in Ephesus (cf. v. 21; also 1 Cor. 16:5–10). Paul sent the letter to Corinth with Timothy and Erastus (see 1 Cor. 16:10), and then later left Ephesus to go through Macedonia and eventually to Corinth

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<sup>20</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983–c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:411). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

himself as well (see Acts 20:1–2; 1 Cor. 16:5, 8–9). Erastus was a Corinthian and is included in Paul's greetings in Rom. 16:23 and 2 Tim. 4:20.

### **Acts 19:23**

**And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.**

A trade union for promotion of industry...

**[that way]** Christian religion (Acts 9:2; Acts 16:17; Acts 18:25-26; Acts 19:9,23; Acts 22:4; Acts 24:14,22).

**No small stir about that way**—Concerning the Gospel, which the apostles preached; and which is termed this way.

### **Artemis and Economics**

As often, religious piety becomes a thin cloak for personal economic interests. The temple of Artemis served as a bank as well as a temple, and people from all over the world deposited funds there. About A.D. 44 (roughly a decade before Paul's arrival), inscriptions there show that the proconsul had to get involved in the temple treasury due to some serious financial irregularities: temple monies were being funneled to private individuals. In Ephesus, politics and religion were as heavily intertwined as religion and economics, and local civic pride was inseparable from the worship of the Ephesian Artemis.

### **Acts 19:24**

**For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;**

Artemis = Greek; Diana = Latin, Roman.

Large industry as everyone that would visit would buy a memento of Diana or Artemis.

In only two incidents recorded in Acts did Gentiles oppose Paul: (a) here and (b) in the case of the Philippian fortune-teller (16:16-24). In both cases the opposition was because of vested monetary interests.

**[shrines]** Greek: *naos* (GSN-3485), temple. These were miniatures of the temple of Diana and the goddess in the middle of the temple background. Some were large statues for homes and others small enough to be carried as charms. The temple was 220 years in building. Money was raised in all Asia Minor. It was 425 feet long, 220 feet wide and beautified by 127 columns 60 feet high made by 127 kings and adorned by beautiful statues.

**[craftsmen]** Greek: *technites* (GSN-5079). Here; Acts 19:38; Hebrews 11:10; Rev. 18:22. They had unions then as we have now. Many unions are mentioned on

papyri discovered in Egypt. The shrine was made of terracotta, marble, and silver. Demetrius was guildmaster of the silversmiths' guild, or trade union. Other workmen had their own union.

**Clarke: Silver shrines for Diana**—It is generally known that the temple of Diana at Ephesus was deemed one of the seven wonders of the world, and was a most superb building. It appears that the silver shrines mentioned here were small portable representations of this temple, which were bought by strangers as matters of curiosity, and probably of devotion. If we can suppose them to have been exact models of this famous temple, representing the whole exterior of its magnificent workmanship, which is possible, they would be held in high estimation, and probably become a sort of substitute for the temple itself, to worshippers of this goddess who lived in distant parts of Greece. The temple of Diana was raised at the expense of all Asia Minor, and yet was two hundred and twenty years in building, before it was brought to its sum of perfection. It was in length 425 feet, by 220 in breadth; and was beautified by 127 columns, which were made at the expense of so many kings; and was adorned with the most beautiful statues. To procure himself an everlasting fame, Erostratus burned it to the ground the same night on which Alexander the Great was born. It is reported that Alexander offered to make it as magnificent as it was before, provided he might put his name on the front; but this was refused. It was afterwards rebuilt and adorned, but Nero plundered it of all its riches. This grand building remains almost entire to the present day, and is now turned into a Turkish mosque. See an account of it in Montfaucon, *Antiq. Expliq.* vol. ii., with a beautiful drawing on plate vi., No. 20. See also Stuart's *Athens*. There were also pieces of silver struck with a representation of the temple of Minerva on one side: many coins occur in the reigns of the first Roman emperors, where temples, with idols in the porch, appear on the reverse; and several may be seen in Muselius, in the reigns of Trajan, Adrian, Antoninus Pius, etc. A beautiful representation of the temple of Diana at Ephesus may be seen on a medal engraved by Montfaucon, in his *Antiq. Expliq. Suppl.* vol. ii. plate 33. It has eight Doric columns in front, which Pliny says were sixty feet in length. In the entrance, the figure of Diana is represented with a sort of tower upon her head; her arms are supported by two staves; at her feet are represented two stags with their backs towards each other. The sun is represented on the right side of her head, and the moon as a crescent on the left. Some think that the medals here referred to are the same that are meant by the silver shrines made by Demetrius and his craftsmen. See Acts 19:27.

**Barnes: Diana.** This was a celebrated goddess of the heathen, and one of the twelve superior deities. In the heavens she was Luna, or Meni, (the moon;) on earth, Diana; and in hell, Hecate, She was sometimes represented with a crescent on her head, a bow in her hand, and dressed in a hunting-habit; at other times with a triple face, and with instruments of torture. She was commonly regarded as the goddess of hunting. She was also worshipped under the various names of Lucina, Proserpine, Trivia, etc. She was also represented with a great number of breasts, to denote her being the fountain of blessings, or as distributing her benefits to each in their proper station. She was worshipped in Egypt, Athens, Cilicia, and among heathen nations generally; but the most celebrated place of her worship was Ephesus—a city peculiarly dedicated to her.

**Brought no small gain**—There were many made, many sold, and probably at considerable prices.

**McGee:** The temple of Diana was a great pagan temple, and it was the center of business. It was the bank of that day. It was also the center of sin. Gross immorality took place around it. It is true that religion can go to a lower level than anything else. That temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the largest Greek temple that was ever built. It was beautiful and was adorned with works of art, but the image of Diana or Artemis was hideous. It was not the Diana of the Greeks, a graceful image, but was the crude, many-breasted, oriental Diana. They were selling those silver images, and it was big business. Paul's ministry was interfering with it.

**ESV: Demetrius** was a skilled demagogue. 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.

### **Acts 19:25**

**Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.**

**Clarke: By this craft we have our wealth**—The word not only signifies wealth, but also abundance. It was a most lucrative trade; and he plainly saw that, if the apostles were permitted to go on thus preaching, the worship of Diana itself would be destroyed; and, consequently, all the gain that he and his fellows derived from it would be brought to nought.

**McGee 25-27:** You can see that the uproar of the silversmiths led by Demetrius was centered, actually, around their bread and butter. They made those little images and sold them, and they were doing very well. There would be many people come to the temple of Diana in Ephesus since it was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. So these men were getting rich by selling these images. I tell you again, you cannot step on a man's pocketbook without hearing him say, "Ouch!"

The worship of Diana had spread throughout Asia. Ephesus was a center of commerce and a center of religion and a center of worship. It was a center for the Oriental and the Occidental, a place where East and West did meet—the worst in both came to Ephesus.

### Acts 19:26

**Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:**

[**this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people**] Showing how successful the apostles had been in winning converts.

**Clarke: This Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people**—From the mouth of this heathen we have, in one sentence, a most pleasing account of the success with which God had blessed the labors of the apostles: not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, they had persuaded and converted much people; for they had insisted that they could be no gods which are made with hands; and this the common sense of the people must at once perceive.

**Barnes: This Paul hath persuaded.** We have here the noble testimony of a heathen to the zeal and success of the ministry of Paul. It is an acknowledgment that his labours had been most strikingly successful in turning the people from idolatry.

When Paul preached in Ephesus, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen did not quarrel with his doctrine. Their anger boiled because his preaching threatened their profits. They made silver statues of the Ephesian goddess Artemis. The craftsmen knew that if people started believing in God and discarding the idols, their livelihood would suffer.

### Acts 19:27

**So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.**

Religious zeal is always the hypocritical pretext: self-interest is real cause...

Agora: 300 ft sq.; vestibule > 400 more.

The Gymnasia (5) 450 x 377 ft, to 925 x 685. 15 acres of ground!

[**Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed**] Diana is pictured as being covered all over with breasts, from the shoulders to the feet; and in other images with breasts to the bottom of the abdomen and the legs covered with heads of animals. She was supposed to be the mother and nourisher of all creation. Some identify her with Semiramus, the queen of Babylon and wife of Nimrod, from whom all licentiousness in ancient worship proceeded.

**Clarke: The temple of the great goddess Diana**—From a number of representations of the Ephesian goddess Diana, which still remain, we find that she was widely different from Diana the huntress. She is represented in some statues all covered over with breasts,

from the shoulders down to the feet; in others she is thus represented, from the breast to the bottom of the abdomen, the thighs and legs being covered with the heads of different animals. From this it is evident that, under this name and form, nature, the nourisher and supporter of all things, was worshipped: the sun and moon, being grand agents, in all natural productions, were properly introduced as her attributes or symbols. Because she was the representative of universal nature, she was called, in opposition to Diana the huntress and goddess of chastity, the GREAT goddess Diana; not only worshipped in Asia, but throughout the whole world; both the Greeks and the Romans unanimously conjoining in her worship.

Several statues of this Ephesian Diana still remain; and some beautiful ones are represented by Montfaucon, in his *Antiq. Expliq.* vol. i. book iii. cap. 15, plates 46, 47, 48. From this father of antiquaries, much information on this subject may be derived. He observes that the original statue of Diana of Ephesus, which was in that noble temple, esteemed one of the wonders of the world, was made of ivory, as Pliny says; but Vitruvius says it was made of cedar; and others, of the wood of the vine. The images of this goddess are divided into several bands, or compartments; so that they appear swathed from the breasts to the feet. On the head is generally represented a large tower, two stories high. A kind of festoon of flowers and fruit descends from her shoulders; in the void places of the festoon a crab is often represented, and sometimes crowned by two genii or victories. The arms are generally extended, or stretched a little out from the sides; and on each one or two lions. Below the festoon, between the two first bands, there are a great number of paps: hence she has been styled by some of the ancients,

**Barnes:** **So that not only**, etc. The grounds of the charge which Demetrius made against Paul were two:-first, that the business of the craftsmen would be destroyed-usually the first thing that strikes the mind of a sinner who is influenced by self-interest alone; and second, that the worship of Diana would cease if Paul and his fellow-labourers were suffered to continue their efforts.

Demetrius's strategy for stirring up a riot was to appeal to his fellow workmen's love of money and then to encourage them to hide their greed behind the mask of patriotism and religious loyalty. The rioters couldn't see the selfish motives for their rioting—instead they saw themselves as heroes for the sake of their land and beliefs.

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

### **Acts 19:28**

**And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.**

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

### **Acts 19:29**

**And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.**

The theatre was 660 ft. in diameter (2 football fields or 40 ft. > than major axis of the Coliseum) 56,700 seating capacity. Temple: one of the seven wonders of the world; built in 550 B.C., pure white marble, burned on the night of the birth of Alexander the Great, 356 B.C., rebuilt even more splendidly. 425 ft. x 220 ft.; 127 columns, 60 ft. high, each a gift of a king, 36 of them ornamented.

Paul eludes again!

Fellow travelers also mentioned in 20:4; 27:2; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14 (3 John 1?).

[If Paul was house of Aquilla and Priscilla (whom he left at Ephesus on his first visit) his asylum would explain Rom 16:3,4.]

All that happened at Ephesus is not known... "I have fought with the beasts of Ephesus" (1 Cor 15:32; cf. 2 Cor 11:24-27).

Alexander = Alexander the coppersmith? (1 Tim 1:19-20; 2 Tim 4:14). Timothy had become a bishop of the church at Ephesus.

**[Gaius]** If a Macedonian, then he is not the one mentioned in Acts 20:4, nor the one in Romans 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14.

**[Aristarchus]** Acts 20:4; Acts 27:2; Col. 4:10; Philemon 1:24.

**[theatre]** Greek: *theatron* (GSN-2302), here; Acts 19:31; 1 Cor. 4:9. Theaters were for public gatherings, sports, and where men were devoured by wild beasts (1 Cor. 15:32).

**Clarke: The whole city was filled with confusion**—Thus we find the peace of the whole city was disturbed, not by an apostle preaching the Gospel of Christ, but by one interested, unprincipled knave, who did not even plead conscience for what he was doing; but that it was by this craft he and his fellows got their wealth, and he was afraid to lose it.

**Clarke: Rushed—into the theater**—The theatres, being very spacious and convenient places, were often used for popular assemblies and public deliberation, especially in matters which regarded the safety of the state.

News and trouble spread quickly in ancient cities, which were very crowded (perhaps two hundred people per acre, a population density found today in the West only in slums). The citizen assembly held its normal meetings in this open-air theater, which accommodated nearly twenty-five thousand people, was almost five hundred feet in diameter and contained many statues of deities.

**ESV:** The Ephesian theater had a capacity of about 12,000 in Paul's time and was the place of assembly for the regular town business meetings. Apparently Gaius and Aristarchus were eventually released, since Aristarchus reappears later as Paul's frequent companion (see 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10; Philem. 24).

### **Acts 19:30**

**And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.**

**[unto the people]** To give account of the Christian faith.

**BBC:** Asiarchs were the most prominent men of the province, who were presiding or had presided in one-year terms over the cult of the emperor and the goddess Roma. Different cities in the Greek East competed for the honor of having the largest imperial cult, so Asiarchs were important to local civic pride. They had authority over the theater, but here they cannot quell this riot; they can only try to stop their Jewish Christian friend from entering. (In accordance with Roman customs, they may have viewed their “friendship” with Paul in terms of providing him support as patrons; in any case, Luke wants us to recognize that their concern for Paul indicates the high social circles Paul had begun to impact in some way.)

These verses are important not only for what they directly state but also for what they imply. **Paul** was eager to defend the gospel, ready to take on his opponents! But the Christians did **not let him. Even some of the officials of the province** would not let him get caught in the riot. They were *Asiarchs* (lit., “rulers of Asia”), in charge of the community’s political and religious welfare. They would be on good terms with Rome and therefore would evidence Christianity’s good standing with the government.<sup>21</sup>

**ESV:** As the main focus of the riot, Paul was in mortal danger, and his fellow Christians were right to hold him back.

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lit. literal, literally

<sup>21</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:411). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

### **Acts 19:31**

**And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.**

[**chief**] Greek: *Asiarches* (GSN-775), Asiarch. They were chosen for their wealth and position to preside over public festivals and games, and defray the expenses.

**Clarke: Certain of the chief of Asia** Some of the Asiarchs. The Asiarchs were those to whom the care and regulation of the public games were intrusted: they were a sort of high priests, and were always persons of considerable riches and influence. These could not have been Christians; but they were what the sacred text states them to have been, his friends; and foreseeing that Paul would be exposed to great danger if he went into the theater, amidst such a tumultuous assembly, they sent a message to him, entreating him not to go into danger so apparent. Query: Did he not go, and fight with these wild beasts at Ephesus? 1 Corinthians 15:32.

**Barnes: Certain of the chief of Asia..** Of the *Asiarchs*. These were persons who presided over sacred things, and over the public games. It was their business to see that the proper services of religion were observed, and that proper honour was rendered to the Roman emperor in the public festivals, at the games, etc. They were annually elected, and their election was confirmed at Rome before it was valid. They held a common council at the principal city within their province, as at Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, etc., to consult and deliberate about the interests committed to their charge in their various provinces.-*Kuinel* and *Schleusner*. Probably they were assembled on such an occasion now; and during their remaining there they had heard Paul preach, and were friendly to his views and doctrines.

**Barnes: Which were his friends.** It does not appear from this that they were Christian converts; but they probably had feelings of respect towards him, and were disposed to defend him and his cause. Perhaps, also, there might have existed a present acquaintance and attachment.

**ESV:** The **Asiarchs** 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 (see also Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.42).

### **Acts 19:32**

**Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.**

[**cried one thing, and some another**] This is a typical picture of an enraged mob, without reason or principle.

Luke's sense of humor is seen in this passage. Ironically most of the people did not even know why they were there. Because the Jews were monotheists and strongly opposed to

idols, they thrust Alexander to the front in order to issue a disclaimer. The reduction in Artemis' idol business was not their fault! However, anti-Semitism took over, the mob refused to listen to a Jew, and they chanted in frenzy for about two hours, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!<sup>22</sup>

**[assembly]** Greek: *ekklesia* (GSN-1577), the same word translated "church," thus proving it means any assembly, good or bad.

**Clarke: Some—cried one thing, and some another—**This is an admirable description of a tumultuous mob, gathered together without law or reason; getting their passions inflamed, and looking for an opportunity to commit outrages, without why or wherefore—principle or object.

**Barnes: And the more part knew not,** etc. The greater part did not know. They had been drawn together by the noise and excitement; but a small part would know the real cause of the commotion. This is usually the case in tumultuous meetings.

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

### **Acts 19:33**

**And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.**

**[Alexander]** The same man as in 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14. He was a Jew whom the Jews at Ephesus chose to represent them in the uproar and to cast all the blame upon Paul and the Christians. The heathen sometimes could not distinguish between Jews and Christians, but in this case Jews were also held responsible because it was known that they opposed the worship of Diana as much as Christians. The Greeks knowing this would not permit his speaking, and cried out in an uproar for two hours (Acts 19:34).

**Clarke: They drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward—**From this and the following verses it is pretty evident that this Alexander was brought forward on this occasion by the Jews, that he might make an oration to the multitude, in order to exculpate the Jews, who were often by the heathens confounded with the Christians; and cast the whole blame of the uproar upon Paul and his party. And he was probably chosen because he was an able speaker; and when he beckoned with his hand; to gain an audience, the Greeks, knowing that he was a Jew, and consequently as much opposed to the worship of Diana as Paul was, would not hear him; and therefore, to drown his apology, for the people, viz. the Jews, they vociferated for the space of two hours, Great is Diana of the Ephesians! There does not seem any just ground from the

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<sup>22</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:412). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

text to suppose that this Alexander was a Christian; or that he was about to make an apology for the Christians: it is generally believed that he is the same with Alexander the coppersmith, of whom St. Paul speaks, 2 Timothy 4:14, and whom, with Philetus, he was obliged to excommunicate, 1 Timothy 1:20. By the Jews putting him forward, we are to understand their earnestness to get him to undertake their defense, and criminate, as much as possible, St. Paul and his companions, and the Christian cause in general; which he would no doubt have done, without vindicating the worship of Diana, which, as a Jew, he would not dare to attempt.

**[defence]** Greek: *apologeomai* (GSN-626), here; Acts 24:10; Acts 25:8; Acts 26:1,2,24; Luke 12:11; Luke 21:14; Romans 2:15; 2 Cor. 12:19. This does not signify the answering of a charge, but simply an apology for the Jews. He intended to show that the Jews were not responsible for the tumult, but that it must be traced to Paul and his friends.

### **Acts 19:34**

**But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.**

**BBC:** Jewish people in Roman Asia were careful not to offend the local residents, and Alexander no doubt intends to explain that the Jewish community did not instigate the current confusion. But typical Greek anti-Judaism and the knowledge that the Jewish community accepted only one God leads to the assumption that the Jewish community instead wishes to explain their *responsibility* for the riot. (This event may help explain the Jewish community's dislike for Paul in Acts 21:27.) Controversial public trials were also often punctuated with shouts.

**McGee:** This was typical mob action. Many of them didn't even know why they were gathered together. However, notice that they do not grant freedom of speech to anyone else. They would not permit Alexander to speak because *they* wanted to run around and squeal, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

**ESV:** 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.

### **Acts 19:35**

**And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter?**

Artemis fashioned from a meteorite? [Jupiter was their supreme god.]

Asiarchs, political rulers of the province of Asia, who were responsible to the Romans were concerned, and sent word to Paul not to venture into the Theater. Romans would not tolerate civil disorder; in danger of losing their status as a free city, unencumbered by direct Roman rule.

**[townclerk]** Greek: *grammateus* (GSN-1122), used 67 times and translated "scribe" 66 times and only here "town clerk" (Matthew 2:4).

**[appeased]** Greek: *katastello* (GSN-2687), quieted. Here; Acts 19:36.

**[he said ...]** He made six main points:

1. No need of advertising the fact that all Ephesians worshiped Diana (Acts 19:35).
2. No man was attempting to contest this fact (Acts 19:36).
3. Not to act so rashly without just grounds for doing so (Acts 19:36).
4. The persons accused were not guilty of breaking the civil laws (Acts 19:37).
5. If they had broken any law, this was not the way to handle it (Acts 19:38-39).
6. They themselves were breaking the law and might be called in question (Acts 19:40).

**[Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?]** This is question 55 in the Book of Acts. The next question is in Acts 21:13.

**[worshipper]** Greek: *neokoros* (GSN-3511), temple-sweeper, and means what our word sexton does. He means to say, "The whole city is devoted to the worship of Diana and it is a reputed honor to the highest people to sweep her temple, and open and shut her doors. Besides, we offer to her the highest sacrifices, and are entrusted with the religious services that pertain to the emperor's safety."

**[fell down from Jupiter]** The original image of Diana was supposed to have descended from heaven so long ago that no one knew its maker or the time it was made. It was in the interests of the priests of Diana to persuade the people that it fell from heaven. Several sacred things are supposed to have fallen from heaven. Euripides stated that the image of Diana of Tauri fell from heaven. Numa claimed that the sacred shields were from heaven. Italian papists claimed that the shrine of our lady of Loretto was a divine gift from above. The image of Minerva of Troy is supposed to have come from Jupiter. St. Isidore said that the heathen priests killed or banished the makers of these things so they could induce the people to believe that they came from heaven.

**ESV:** The **town clerk** was the chief administrative officer of the city, the liaison between the town assembly and the Roman officials. He assured the crowd that their city's reputation was secure. The **sacred stone that fell from the sky** probably refers to a meteorite. Meteorites were associated with Artemis worship.

**Clarke: Ye men of Ephesus**—The speech of this man may be thus analyzed:

1. He states that there was no need of a public declaration that the Ephesians were worshippers of Diana; this every person knew, and nobody attempted to contest it, Acts 19:35, 36.
2. That the persons accused were not guilty of any public offense, nor of any breach of the laws of the city, Acts 19:37.
3. That, if they were, this was not a legal method of prosecuting them, Acts 19:38, 39.
4. That they themselves, by this tumultuous meeting, had exposed themselves to the censure of the law, and were in danger of being called into question for it, Acts 19:40. See Dodd.

**Clarke: Is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana**—The word *neocoros*, which we translate worshipper, signified at first, among the ancient Greeks, no more than sweeper of the temple, and answered nearly to our sexton: in process of time, the care of the temple was intrusted to this person: at length the *neocori* became persons of great consequence, and were those who offered sacrifices for the life of the emperor. Whole cities took this appellation, as appears on many ancient coins and medals; and Ephesus is supposed to have been the first that assumed this title. At this time, it was commonly known as belonging to this city. “What man is there that knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is the Neocoros of the great goddess Diana?” As if he had said: “The whole city is devoted to her worship: it is reputed an honor to our highest characters even to sweep her temple, and open and shut her doors. Besides, we offer to her the highest sacrifices; and are intrusted with the religious service that pertains to the emperor’s safety.”

### **Acts 19:36**

**Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.**

[rashly] Greek: *propetes* (GSN-4312), headstrong (2 Tim. 3:4).

### **Acts 19:37**

**For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.**

[robbers] Greek: *hierosulos* (GSN-2417), plunderers of temples; spoilers of sacred places. The apostles acted only to enlighten the minds of the people, not to mock their worship.

**Clarke: These men**—are neither robbers of churches; Spoilers of sacred places. As his design evidently was to appease and conciliate the people, he fixed first on a most incontrovertible fact: These men have not spoiled your temples; nor is there any evidence that they have even blasphemed your goddess. The apostles acted as prudent men should: they endeavored to enlighten the minds of the multitude, that the absurdity

of their gross errors might be the more apparent; for, when they should know the truth, it was likely that they would at once abandon such gross falsehood.

**Barnes: Which are neither robbers of churches.** The word churches we now apply to edifices reared for purposes of Christian worship. As no such churches had then been built, this translation is unhappy, and is not at all demanded by the original. The Greek word is applied properly to those who commit sacrilege, who plunder temples of their sacred things. The meaning here is, that Paul and his companions had not been guilty of robbing the temple of Diana, or any other temple. The charge of sacrilege could not be brought against them. Though they had preached against idols and idol worship, yet they had offered no violence to the temples of idolaters, nor had they attempted to strip them of the sacred utensils employed in their service. What they had done, they had done peaceably.

**Barnes: Nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.** They had not used harsh or reproachful language of Diana. This had not been charged on them, nor is there the least evidence that they had done it. They had opposed idolatry; had reasoned against it; and had endeavoured to turn the people from it. But there is not the least evidence that they had ever done it in harsh or reproachful language. And it shows that men should employ *reason*, and not harsh or reproachful language against any pervading evil; and that the way to remove it is to *enlighten* the minds of men, and to *convince* them of the error of their ways. Men gain nothing by bitter and reviling words; and it is much to obtain the testimony of even the enemies of religion-as Paul did of the chancellor of Ephesus-that no such words had been used in describing their crimes and follies.

### **Acts 19:38**

**Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.**

**[Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open]** Let Demetrius and his crowd follow the law if they have any just cause.

**[implead]** Greek: *engkaleo* (GSN-1458), accuse or charge (Acts 19:38,40; Acts 23:28-29; Acts 26:2,7; Romans 8:33). Let them accuse each other in the court; i.e., let them defend their own cause, and arraign one another. The laws are equal, and impartial justice will be done.

**BBC:** The financial scandal surrounding the temple of Artemis at this time was being addressed through the courts and by appealing to the proconsul; the economic dispute that had provoked this illegal gathering should be addressed in the same manner.

The proconsul met with the gatherings of citizens on various days in nine different cities of the province. Each province had only one proconsul, but Luke may use the plural

because the proconsul of Ephesus died about A.D. 54, and several officials may have been carrying out his administrative functions till the new proconsul arrived.

### **Acts 19:39**

**But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.**

### **Acts 19:40**

**For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.**

[**For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar**] Romans always dreaded mobs and made strict laws against them. Any man who stirred up a mob was liable to forfeit his life. Demetrius no doubt felt himself in great personal danger and at the mercy of those whom he accused.

[**concourse**] Assembly, throng, or crowd.

**Barnes: To be called in question.** By the government; by the Roman authority. Such a tumult, continued for so long a time, would be likely to attract the attention of the magistrates, and expose them to their displeasure. Popular commotions were justly dreaded by the Roman government; and such an assembly as this, convened without any good cause, would not escape their notice. There was a Roman law which made it capital for any one to be engaged in promoting a riot. *Qui caetum, et concursum fecerit, capite puniatur*: "He who raises a mob, let him be punished with death."

The city of Ephesus was under the domination of the Roman empire. The main responsibility of the local city leaders was simply to maintain peace and order. If they failed to control the people, Rome would remove the appointed officials from office. The entire town could also be put under martial law, taking away many civic freedoms.

**ESV: 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 town assembly. there are proconsuls. A "proconsul" (Gk. *anthypatos*) was the head of government in a Roman province (cf. 13:7; 18:12). The plural here may refer to the fact that at that time in Ephesus they were between the reigns of two proconsuls. in danger. The crowd in the theater (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 town 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; see notes on 18:14; 23:27) that the Christian gospel was not contrary to the Roman rule of law and was not disruptive of public order, and that accusations made to that effect were untrue.

## **Acts 19:41**

**And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.**

Clerk's speech: uproar undignified, unjustifiable and unnecessary.

The riot in Ephesus convinced Paul that it was time to move on. But it also showed that the law still provided some protection for Christians as they challenged the worship of the goddess Artemis and the most idolatrous religion in Asia.

**Clarke: He dismissed the assembly** Another proof that the word which we generally translate church, signifies an assembly of any kind, good or bad, legal or illegal.

1. How forcible are right words! From the conduct of this prudent, sensible man, we may learn how much influence persons of this character may have, even over the unbridled multitude. But, where the civil power associates itself with the lawless might of the many, THERE must be confusion and every evil work. What a blessing to the community is the civil law! Were it not for this, the unthinking multitude would destroy others, and at last destroy themselves. Law and justice are from God; and the civil power, by which they are supported and administered, should be respected by all who regard the safety of their persons or property.
2. Though the ministry of St. Paul was greatly blessed at Ephesus, and his preaching appears to have been very popular, yet this sunshine was soon darkened: peace with the world cannot last long; the way of the Lord will always be opposed by those who love their own ways.
3. How few would make an outward profession of religion, were there no gain connected with it! And yet, as one justly observes, religion is rendered gainful only by some external part of it. For this very reason, the external part of religion is always on the increase, and none can find fault with it without raising storms and tempests; while the internal part wastes and decays, no man laying it to heart. Demetrius and his fellows would have made no stir for their worship, had not the apostle's preaching tended to discredit that by which they got their wealth. Most of the outcries that have been made against all revivals of religion—revivals by which the Church has been called back to its primitive principles and purity, have arisen out of self-interest. The cry of, the Church is in danger, has been echoed only by those who found their secular interest at stake; and knew that reformation must unmask them and show that the slothful and wicked servants could no longer be permitted to live on the revenues of that Church which they disgraced by their lives, and corrupted by their false doctrines. He that eats the Church's bread should do the Church's world: and he that will not work should not be permitted to eat.





