

ACTS 19: 8 – 20; THE BATTLEFIELD OF EPHEBUS

We left off last week with Paul having found a dozen disciples in Ephesus, who had not heard of the Holy Spirit of His baptism. Paul took care of that and as we shall see today, those disciples continued to follow Paul and learn from him.

Paul spends more time in Ephesus than any other city as far as we can tell. There was good reason for that. We will see the typical pattern of Paul going first to the synagogue and when, finally, there is too much opposition there, he will move from inside the synagogue outside, where he can reach a broader audience. There is a great deal of background we will cover, which leads up to a massive showdown – a great battle.

Ephesus – a trade center with a harbor. Great temples. One of the largest markets in that part of the world. Bustling with trade in many items, one of them being idols made for the temple of Artemis/ Diana.

Nashville is known as “Music City USA.” It is the center of the country music industry. The city

revolves around that industry. Los Angeles, (Hollywood) is known for the film industry. Its claim to fame revolves around that. Ephesus' claim to fame, outside of being at the center of many trade routes and its large market, was that it was the home of the Temple of Diana/ Artemis. In that day, to be able to host a Temple of such importance was an honor. The protection of the city, from plague, famine, earthquakes, war, etc., was thought to be based on the happiness of the gods/ goddesses, represented by the local temples. And the temple to Artemis/ Diana was a great one.

Temple of Artemis, also called Artemesium, **temple at Ephesus**, now in western Turkey, was **one of the Seven Wonders** of the World. The great **temple** was built by Croesus, king of Lydia, about 550 bce and was rebuilt after being burned by a madman named Herostratus in 356 bc.

It was a haven for all sorts of lewd things. Artemis was a fertility goddess. A stone, thought to have fallen from heaven from Zeus, was the foundation of the myth. As we will see in later verses in Acts, Her temple and all the witchcraft that surrounded it was a big business and the whole city/ region was a hub of incantations, curses and exorcisms and all that goes with those things. It was a center for the dark arts.

And it here, in this city that Paul was led to stay for some two years, as he combatted the powers of darkness, being the instrument through whom God made it plain, that those powers no longer had any sway over the earth and those who, in faith, pledged their loyalty to Him.

It is from here, and because of this context that Paul wrote:

Ephesians 6:12

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

It is with this statement in mind that we need to see what God was doing here. This explains some of the stranger things we read in this pericope.

8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued

for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Typical pattern and the kingdom of God.

The school of Tyrannus.

Tyrannus' full name: "**Tyrannus Horace Rex**"

Some manuscripts tell us that Paul spoke here from 10 am to 4 pm. These are the hours when many of the people rested in the heat of the day. It has been said that there were more people asleep at 1 pm than there were at 1 am.

Paul would have worked in the mornings and then taught through the "siesta hours", then most likely have gone back to work afterwards. It is interesting that the people were willing to give up their nap time in order to attend the teaching.

This went on for two years.

The result – The Gospel had permeated the entire area. (Does "all" mean "all?")

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Strange happenings.

"Handkerchiefs and aprons" = sweat bands, (for the

head) and aprons. Things Paul would have worked with in tent making. He would have made aprons. (leather ones)

Important note: Paul continued to work with his hands. Writing from Miletus to Ephesus, Paul wrote in Acts 20: **“I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”**

Paul wrote this regarding what we are reading about now, knowing that there were many in that city, Ephesus, who dabbled in the “industry” of religion just for the money. He was careful that no one would be able to make that charge against him. That will come into play in the near future, as we go through Acts.

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

Unusual miracles. (KJV= special, ESV = extraordinary) Miracles are, by definition, unusual, but what we have listed here are more unusual than most of what we have seen in Acts. We don't see these things done on a regular basis, even when we read about the Spirit moving. Why? Look at where Paul is. Ephesus is the "Music City" of occultism. God moved in "unusual" ways in order to combat this evil and to make a point.

God doesn't always do the same thing the same way in every situation. We have seen this time and again in Acts. There aren't many formulas here. It is up to God how He wants to work THROUGH Paul – and us, for that matter.

God worked THROUGH Paul. Paul wasn't moving on his own, in his own power, or even in God's power, for that matter. God was moving through him. WE can see how this plays out in the next verses.

13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom

Paul preaches.” 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?”

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

Itinerant – traveling from place to place. There were many of these guys, especially in Ephesus. Remember, it was a hub of spiritual activity. Many were charlatans, but there were also some legitimate ones.

The Bible never speaks as if the demonic realm isn't a reality. In fact, it expressly states that it exists.

Sceva – there are lists of the chief priests from this region and Sceva never appears on any of them. Probably a rogue priest who became an itinerant exorcist.

Notice, these guys would command the demon to leave, “... by the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.”

Ha Shem – the name. To have the name of the entity, or anyone else for that matter, meant to have control over them. “What is your name? Legion...”

Who are you? I know Paul and Jesus. The result – they get a beat down.
Further results.

17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Before social media, “word of mouth” was the way news traveled. (We see that Paul was easily tracked and stalked by those who opposed him through this method.) It worked. News got around of the difference between Paul’s work and the works of the wanna-be’s. Look at the results – people were saved in droves. A revival took place, right in the heart of the enemy’s territory! God’s power was shown to be greater than any of the gods. People burned their books of enchantments. Many of these would have been “church people”

who were still dabbling or believing in this witchcraft.

50,000 pieces of silver = 6 million dollars, roughly in today's money. These were expensive books, not paperbacks. In fact, any book was expensive in the days before the printing press. They were giving up a great deal. They didn't sell the books. We can see how the Gospel had affected their finances. Some would say this was in a negative way, meaning that they lost money. That is how it goes sometimes, when God moves us from this world and into His kingdom.

So, what can we take from all this?

1. Those who carry forth the Gospel of the Kingdom will always face resistance, as Paul did. He simply moved from the synagogue into the secular space in order to continue teaching.
2. God, through Paul, worked "unusual" miracles in Ephesus. Why? I believe God did these "unusual" miracles because of the spiritual climate of the city. Remember, this was a hub of spiritual activity – whether good or bad. And a large part of the Gospel of the Kingdom is that since Jesus ascended, the dark, malevolent forces in this world no longer rule or have any power other than that given to them by the one

who bows to them. God was manifesting this through Paul's 'gospeling' and his works. God met a greater spiritual resistance with an overwhelming spiritual counterattack of His own.

3. What was the difference between Paul and those who attempted to use his "formula?" God won't be wielded like a weapon we pull from our belts, at our own whims. (The ark and the gifts). We can't just try to pull the name of Jesus and throw it around like some magic formula. Paul didn't just walk through the streets barking the name of Jesus. He did what he did, when he did, as the Spirit moved him.

There is no power that can be wrought from the Name of Jesus, unless there is submission and obedience to the owner of the name. The exorcists had no ability to claim the name of Jesus. "We cast you out by the name of that guy Paul keeps talking about!" That won't work. There has to be a relationship there. I can't shout to someone, "Stop in the name of the law!" I don't have a badge. I have no relationship with the police. They are just empty words when I say them. But for Paul, or any other child of God, there is that relationship. And we can rely on the power and authority of the name of Jesus, when He is our Lord, savior and king.

The enemy has no control over us. Go, walk in that peace, proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, and see how God moves Heaven and earth to accomplish His will. (Not necessarily ours)
“Thy will be done, on earth as in Heaven.”