

Ephesian Magic Supplanted

Acts 19:8-41

Halifax: 3 March 2013

Introduction:

Today we come to a high point in the book of Acts...

- Ephesus is the last place that Paul will spend extended time as a free man—
 - and in this account, Luke leaves us with an example of the way Jesus Christ subdues a whole region under His Lordship.
 - It is something He will do again and again in the history of the world to one city and one nation after another.
- You will remember that in the opening of the book of Acts, we saw that this book of selective history might just as well be called *The Acts of Jesus Christ*.
 - In presenting his theme to Theophilus, Luke declares that in his former account, he set forth all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach...
 - In other words, Luke sees Christ's earthly ministry as only the beginning of His work of subduing the earth to the gospel—
 - In Acts, Luke is going to present His ongoing ministry as He begins to subdue first the Jews, then the Samaritans, and finally the Gentiles (the other nations) to Himself.
- In connection with some of this, we took Psalm 110 as our Psalm of Focus...
 - In that Psalm, it speaks of how Jesus will reign until He has put all nations under His feet...
 - And it explains that His people—His elect people—will be made willing in the day of His power!
 - Whenever anyone comes to acknowledge that He is Lord, it is because the power of the Lord Jesus has preceded them to make them willing.
- In Acts, we have seen the Lord Jesus take dominion over both Jews and Gentiles...
 - But many of the Gentiles who have responded to the gospel were those who were already loosely associated with the synagogue—
 - They were those Gentiles who were prepared, having already forsaken their idols and such.
 - But more recently, we have begun to see what we might call pure Gentiles (raw pagans) turning from their idols to serve the living God.
 - And here at Ephesus,
 - Luke makes it very clear that the gospel not only reaches God-fearing Gentiles,
 - but also those who are steeped in their pagan ways and pagan hopes.
 - It shows us the utter futility of trying to stop Jesus when He comes to save.
 - In the heart of this passage, we have Gentiles coming forth with their magic books to burn them as worthless and wicked things!
 - And the impact is so great that the silversmiths who manufacture implements of idolatry are concerned for their trade!
 - But they are seen to be completely powerless to stop the progress of the gospel.
 - In this account, Luke is giving Theophilus a harbinger of what was to take place in the whole Roman Empire!

- The Lord Jesus was going to supplant paganism and establish His Kingdom of righteousness in its place!
 - There would be a willing people in the day of His power who would cast off their pagan ways and serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
- What a grand and glorious thing it is when our Lord does this!
 - He has continued to do this in one place after another throughout world history.
 - People group after people group has turned from idolatry to serve the living God and to receive and rest upon Christ alone for their salvation.
- It is true that His people often grow cold over the generations—just as Israel did—and become hardened, even as we and our fathers have done...
 - But our Lord always continues to march forth and subdue yet another and another people.
 - And the way I read Romans 11 and Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 and Psalm 110 and Psalm 72 and Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 11,
 - It seems to me that we have every reason to expect that eventually, the Lord will restore all the nations at once.
 - But whether you accept that or not, our dear Lord Jesus has supplanted paganism time after time...
 - And in Acts 19, Paul’s ministry at Ephesus is the harbinger of what our Lord was to do
 - (and from our perspective now had done)
 - in one nation after another!
 - They bow to Him as Lord!

And so now for your encouragement, let’s take a look at what Jesus did at Ephesus when He made them volunteers in the day of His power.

I. See first of all how our Lord begins to subdue Ephesus to Himself...

A. Here we find a synagogue that is actually interested!

A.1. You see that according to verse 8, Paul is able to continue his ministry for three months!

A.1.a. This is unusual—at Thessalonica it was only three weeks until he was driven out by angry Jews who opposed the gospel.

- Some places, like Pisidian Antioch, he was only allowed to preach the gospel once in the synagogue.
- But you see that here at Ephesus, it is three months...
 - And it is not that he toned down his message!
 - No, it shows clearly that he did not hold back:
 - **Acts 19:8: he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.**
 - *Bold* speaking is plain and direct speaking.
 - *Reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God* means that he was pressing the gospel upon them...
 - He was insisting that the Kingdom of God had come with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that they needed to repent and believe the gospel!

- He was showing them from scripture that no one can be saved who does not trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ alone for his salvation.

TRANS> Three months!

A.1.b. What great love Jesus has for His covenant people!

- He commands His servants to go to them first and to remain with them as long as they are willing to listen.
- And while they do, those who are appointed to salvation receive the gospel!
 - Those who were already regenerate rejoice that the Messiah they had long hoped for has come...
 - And many others who were not regenerate at all hear the gospel and the Lord opens their heart and they believe.
 - They are immediately brought from the darkness to the light!
 - They are immediately justified and also receive the blessed Holy Spirit to remain with them forever.
 - Their sins are forgiven and their hearts are turned to the Lord forever!
 - He makes them willing in the day of His power.
- Oh covenant people—here is the Lord’s great love to us!
 - See that you do not resist Him when He speaks to you!
 - See that there is not an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.
 - How can you harden yourself in the face of such love?
 - See that you don’t!

A.2. But alas, there are fools among the Jews at Ephesus who resist...

- Verse 9 says that they are hardened—
 - **Acts 19:9: “some were hardened and spoke evil of the way.”**
 - Indeed they would have to be hard as cold stone to resist such a glorious gospel that has power to save!
- These wicked, bitter souls make it impossible for the Apostle to continue proclaiming his life-giving message at the synagogue in Ephesus.
 - How destructive hardened hearts are!
 - They drove the gospel away from their children and from their fellow worshippers at the synagogue...
 - What judgement is fitting for such!
 - Here is the only message that can save, and they drive it out!
 - Jesus’ servant, Paul, would have remained if they had not rejected him, and they would had the privilege of knowing Jesus and introducing Him to their Gentile neighbours...
 - But they refused!
 - The words of Jesus come to mind when He Himself would have ministered to Jerusalem.
 - **Lu 13:34: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!**

B. But Christ will still have a people at Ephesus—with or without the Jews!

- B.1. You see that the apostle finds another venue—another place to preach the gospel...
- It is a school, probably a lecture hall—the school of Tyrannus...
 - The footnote is added in the Western Text that he ministered from the fifth to the tenth hour (11:00 am to 4:00 pm for us).
 - This was during the time when the regular lectures would ordinarily been concluded for the day—
 - Everyone in Ephesus usually took a siesta at this time...
 - so Paul is given the use of this school in the off hours...
 - You see in this the zeal of Paul for this work...
 - When he was shut down from ministering at the synagogue, he found another place to preach the gospel!
 - Probably, those who believed had already begun meeting in homes on the Lord's Day for worship and for the Lord's Supper...
 - but the synagogue had been used especially for evangelism and Paul, in his zeal for the gospel, found another place that was suited to that!
 - When you are really committed to doing something, you will find a way to do it!
 - People are amazingly creative and industrious when there are things that they really want to do...
 - I was thinking the other day about how my Mom, for good reasons, did not buy me the expensive bicycle I wanted that my friends were getting from their parents...
 - I wanted it so much that I found a way—I worked until I could buy it myself.
 - If you are really committed to doing something, you will find a way!
 - If you really want to share the gospel with people, you will find a way.
 - If not, there are always plenty of excuses.
 - I have to say that I am rather amazed at some of the excuses I hear sometimes as a minister.
 - You also see Paul's zeal in his tireless labour...
 - Though he was working as a tentmaker in the morning,
 - he lectured in this hall daily, probably in the heat of the day (Ephesus can be very hot), for the space of two years.

TRANS> Now look at what the Lord did through this tireless labour!

- B.2. The gospel extends beyond the walls of the synagogue!
- B.2.a. There were many who had been saved at the synagogue and we are told here that Paul took them with him to the school of Tyrannus.
- But verse 10 explains that Paul's two year ministry at this school brought it about that:
 - **Acts 19:10: all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**
 - Admittedly, Luke is using hyperbole to make his point—but the point is clearly made!
 - There was a huge impact...

- It was a little humorous to see how some of the liberals want to call this into question—
 - They really seem to hate Acts 19...
- But they really cannot deny the impact that the gospel had in Asia—there is no other way to account for the presence of so many Christians there.
 - It's similar to the problem they have explaining the impact of the gospel in Africa today.

B.2.b. But I want you to observe what I mentioned in the introduction...

- In other places where Paul ministered, there were Jews and Gentiles, but for the most part the Gentiles were those who were already loosely connected with the synagogues...
 - But here we see what we might call pure Gentiles—or rank pagans who were caught up in magic coming to the Lord!
 - In a moment, we will take a fuller look at verse 19 and how these Gentiles bring their magic books—lots of them—and burn them!
 - For now, I just want you to see the point that Gentiles who were steeped in their pagan spirituality were being converted!

B.2.c. Praise be to God the Father and to His Son Jesus Christ!

- If no one else at the synagogues would hear, the Father will find others to give to His Son!
 - He goes to the covenant people first, but if they will not have Him, the Father will give Him the Gentiles.
- This is what we see going on in world history—even today!
 - There are many crusty, hardened church people who are far from the gospel—
 - There are many like that in our city and our province and our nation—
 - They are baptized, but they will not have Christ as Lord and Saviour.
 - They will not receive Him and rest upon Him as He is offered in the gospel.
 - But we see millions across the world who are steaming to our dear Saviour!
 - He will always have a willing people in the day of His power.
 - And once He is pleased to do so,
 - that same power can return to the hard hearted Jews and the hard hearted Christians (who are Christians only in name) and save them.
 - And when it does, they will have no power to resist Him.

TRANS> But now let me show you how our gracious Lord tailors His work at Ephesus in such a way that they might more readily receive His saving mercy.

- He does just what is needed to reach them...
 - It is something He often does when He brings the gospel to a pagan people...

II. In His mercy, He makes a direct assault on the things that people have wrongly set their hope in.

A. At Ephesus, it was magic that they were trusting in!

A.1. Before the gospel took over, Ephesus was what we might call the magic capital of the world.

- Books with magic spells in them were referred to (all over the empire) as “Ephesian Letters.”

- There are collections of these that can be seen in museums all over the world today.
- These books contain various formulas using the names of various gods (which were demons) to cast spells or provide protection or success or healings, or to exorcise evil spirits.
 - Many of the spells depended on secrecy and would no longer work if they were divulged, so this drove up the price of magic books considerably.
 - This also created an exclusive market for professional practitioners of magic to arise...
 - Only they knew the formulas which had to be kept secret, so if people wanted the help of magic, they had to either buy expensive manuals or hire a professional.
- And as everybody wanted the help of magic—it was very popular—there was a thriving magic industry!
 - There were many such practitioners of magic...
 - And some of the most respected of these were actually Jewish exorcists.
 - We are introduced to one of these practitioners in verse 14—“Sceva and Sons” we will call them.
 - Sceva called himself a Jewish High Priest...
 - Of course there was really only one high priest and he was in Jerusalem, but it sounded better for a business name to call himself a high priest or a chief priest.
 - He and his seven sons, apparently, had a thriving business at Ephesus—else all of his sons would not have been in it with him.
 - We will return to Sceva and sons in a minute.

A.2. But first I want you to see how Jesus gives Paul miracles that were perfectly suited to show the Ephesians His superiority to their magic...

- He actually takes here what was so highly valued—exorcisms and healings—and shows that He is Lord over these.
- He actually performs miracles through Paul that would have made the practitioners at Ephesus envious...look at verse 11-12:
 - **Acts 19:11-12: Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 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.**
 - You see that these miracles are described as unusual...
 - Miracles are, of course, by nature extraordinary,
 - but even for miracles,
 - these were extraordinary—not in accord with the Lord’s normal way of working.
 - Paul was making tents, and in the heat at Ephesus, he used head bands and sweat bands to absorb the sweat...
 - And people would take these to the sick and the sick would be healed and evil spirits would be cast out!
 - The Lord Jesus was, we might say, doing miracles in the *language* of Ephesian magic.

A.3. Jesus does this, not to show them that He is like the magicians at Ephesus, but quite the opposite—

- to show them that He is **not** like the magicians at Ephesus—that He is Lord over all and does whatever He pleases!

- But all these healings and exorcisms were going on through Paul’s aprons and sweat bands...

A.3.a. And of course this catches the attention of those in the magic industry!

- Of course, they do not want to be out done.
- They suppose that they can tap into this new magic power that Paul is using!
 - Verse 13 explains:
 - **Acts 19:13: 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.”**

A.3.b. And then we have this particular account of what happened when the seven sons of Sceva tried this. Look at verse 14-15:

- **Acts 19:14-15: Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?”**
 - Isn’t that great?
 - Sometimes you have to love these evil spirits!
 - They are often so blunt with the truth!
 - This spirit makes it clear that he certainly recognizes Jesus, but that Jesus is not going to listen to the incantations of a magic man and he has nothing to fear from these seven sons!
 - In this way, Jesus is showing clearly that His name cannot be used in a magic formula the way names were used in demon magic!
 - He is Lord, and only those who are duly called can perform miracles in His name.
 - And even then, not by their own decision, but only when Jesus directs them!
 - The primary purpose of the signs was to confirm that those who preached in His name were speaking by His authority.
 - The very point is that His servants are doing what He commands—He does not do what they command!
 - It was just the opposite of pagan magic where the gods were manipulated to act by formulas.
 - And just to make it absolutely clear that these seven sons of Sceva have no power at all over this evil spirit...
 - the spirit turns on them!
 - He is very happy that they have no authority to use the name of Jesus, and he celebrates by displaying his power over them...
 - Look at what happens to the poor sons of Sceva...
 - **Acts 19:16: 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.**
 - Now picture this—
 - Seven magic men and **one** demon possessed man—
 - And they are happy to get out of there alive—even if without clothes and covered with wounds!
 - This definitely made the news in Ephesus!

- “Did you hear what happened to the sons of Sceva when they tried to cast out a demon in the name of Jesus?”

TRANS> Now of course we are much more sophisticated than these Ephesians who believed in magic!

- We have had years of rationalistic enlightenment thinking and we do not dabble in such silliness...

B. But my friends, what happens at Ephesus applies to us too!

- We cling to things that are even more stupid than magic.

B.1. We trust in what is not God or from God—whatever that may be—and that is just as foolish!

- When Jesus is merciful to us, He causes us to see how worthless the things we trust in really are...
- But when He is judging us as a society, He leaves us in the darkness of our deceptions and we put our hope in worthless, futile, empty things!

B.2. What are some of the foolish things that we trust in today?

- I think a friend of mine, Tony Locke, describe this quite well in a sermon he sent to me last week.
 - He is speaking about the influence of the false prophet of Revelation and how he speaks lies into our society.
 - This is what Tony says...
- The False Prophet wants us to believe that we can create a world utopia.
 - If we work hard enough we can solve the Palestinian conflict, end world hunger, cure breast cancer and cure Aids.
 - God is never part of the solution. In fact, the False Prophet paints Christians as radicals who hold back science and progressive social issues.
 - Our children are taught that the world needs to be saved by not burning fossil fuels.
 - The False Prophet would have us believe that Christian America has enslaved the world in our promotion of oil.
 - Salvation is promised those who replace coal and oil with wind farms and solar power.
- All these false gospels inoculate the masses from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - What could be more noble than saving ourselves and the planet?
 - The spirit of anti-Christ inspires the world with these false promises of salvation.
 - [And I might add that many so called Christians will use the name of Jesus to pursue the hopes of the world—like a green planet.
 - The error here is that they shift the focus away from salvation from sin and reconciliation with God to environmentalism and make Jesus a leader in their way of saving the planet instead of submitting to His salvation.
 - Tony goes on...]
 - Let me sound a little nutty for a second. Almost every movie ends with the False Prophet’s version of Heaven: a Christ-less Utopia.
 - How does The Little Mermaid end?
 - The conflict is done, there’s no suffering, no poverty and no pain.
 - As the camera pulls away from happy souls, the music lifts your heart into feelings of euphoria and joy.

- What a wonderful imaginary escape!
- This is the problem with television shows like the Cosby's.
 - It was good family television, but it amplified the message of the False Prophet that a healthy home and a blessed life can be found pursuing good moral values, not Christ.
- So the unique characteristics of Heaven (peace, joy, love, hope, beauty, family, no tears or suffering) are added to the end of most feel good movies and television series.
 - The False Prophet is trying to sell you a godless New World Order, ruled by the anti-Christ, where there is never a mention of Jesus in the public square and where man saves himself.
 - Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15: Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.**
- Let me illustrate with a more pointed example.
 - There is a great idea for getting children to read called the Scholastic Book Club.
 - I think it's great that our public schools work to place books in our homes for our children to learn.
 - How about these two books: *Conversations with God* and *Conversations with God for Teens*.
 - Sounds like a sweet lamb right?
 - But as Jesus warned, these two books are ferocious wolves.
 - The books are a fictional discussion between children and God.
 - Children ask questions, and the "voice of God" answers.
 - Here's an example: one young girl asks, "Why am I a lesbian?"
 - The answer is, "You were born that way."
 - Then she is told to go out and "celebrate" her differences.
 - Another girl asks, "I am living with my boyfriend. My parents say that I should marry him because I am living in sin. Should I marry him?"
 - The voice of God replies, "Who are you sinning against? Not me, because you have done nothing wrong."
 - Another teen asks if God forgives sin.
 - The voice of God replies, "I do not forgive anyone because there is nothing to forgive.
 - There is no such thing as right or wrong."
- These are not the words of a lamb, it is the voice of the False Prophet.
 - These are not the words of an educator, it is the voice of the anti-Christ.
 - These are not the words of people who love children, it is the voice of the Dragon.
- This False Prophet creates a new moral code which insulates the masses from the call of the Gospel.
 - People feel good about themselves because they joined good causes.
 - They did community service so they are morally superior.
 - They feel like they have atoned for their sins.
 - They have saved themselves.

TRANS> Pastor Locke has done a good job showing us the foolish things that we trust in today!

- It makes the Ephesians look a lot better when you compare them with us.

B.3. But I want to tell you something about the false hopes and aspirations of people like us and like the Ephesians...

B.3.a. The day always comes when the Lord shows us how foolish we have been to trust in such things.

- We can get so deluded because it is all around us and everybody is believing it...
- But then the Lord comes in His mercy and He wakes us up to reality.
- Once we see, we are embarrassed and ashamed and find it hard to believe how stupid we have been.
- It is a rude awakening indeed.
- Everything you were hoping in is brought down and shown to be worthless.

B.3.b. You can see how the people at Ephesus responded when they heard what had happened to Sceva and Sons!

- In verse 17, it says:
 - **Acts 19:17: 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.**
- Their fear and reverence was shifted from magic to Jesus Christ!
 - Everyone was forced to admit that Jesus is Lord.
 - This is what happened in Egypt at the Exodus...
 - Egypt's gods were judged—that was most of the plagues were about...
 - It is a very intimidating thing when the things you were trusting in are crumbled because the Lord has come near!
 - The Egyptians feared the Lord and so did the Israelites.
 - Everyone knows that He is Lord when He does this.

B.3.c. It is hard, but it is a great mercy whenever Jesus judges our gods and the things that we are trusting in.

- Because then we can be delivered from our deceptions.
 - We see that His salvation is the only salvation that really matters!
 - We see that He is the only one who has authority to save us.
 - Everything else comes short—it is all a lie.

III. There is always a response when Jesus reveals that He is Lord.

- It is something that you simply cannot be neutral about.
 - You either get very offended and defensive...
 - or you come to Him rejoicing in His salvation and delighting in His glory.

A. You can see the good effect that the revelation of Jesus as Lord had on the believers at Ephesus.

A.1. These were new believers, and they had been clinging to their magic for a long time...so it was hard for them to part with it...

- Just as we cling to our secularism and our materialism and the notion that we can all be saved by being nice and denying sin...
- Even though they had trusted in Jesus, some of them were still clinging to their magic books just in case.

- A.2. But when Jesus made it clear at Ephesus that He was Lord, I want you to see what these new believers did!
- They stopped trusting in these worthless things!
 - They saw that their magic was worthless and they got rid of it all!
 - Look at verse 18:
 - **Acts 19:18: And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 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 totalled fifty thousand pieces of silver.**
 - Boy, we thought our fuel was expensive!
 - This is one of the most expensive fires ever seen!
 - The pieces of silver probably refer to coins that were worth a day's wage and there were 50,000 of them!
 - In our currency, the fuel for this fire was something like 3 million dollars!
 - But the Ephesians rightly saw these high priced books as utterly worthless before the majesty of Jesus Christ!
- A.3. Now what about you?
- What worthless things are you holding on to?
 - What are refusing to let go of as a believer?
 - What is hindering you from wholehearted service to Jesus?
 - Let it go!
 - Burn it up in the fire!
 - Don't just put it on the shelf where you can get it out again.
 - Turn it to ashes and be done with it!
 - Clinging to it is what keeps you from glorifying and enjoying the Lord.
 - You are hanging on to stuff that you need to let go of.
 - Don't you see that Jesus is Lord?
 - Don't justify it, burn it! It is hindering you!
 - Don't make excuses—burn it!
 - It has no place in your life as a Christian.
- A.4. You can see what the outcome was when they let go of these worthless things!
- Verse 20 tells you.
 - **Acts 19:20: So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.**
 - That is what always happens when Jesus reveals that He is Lord and that whatever else we are trusting in is worthless.
 - The word grows and prevails...
 - We begin to see His glory and to live for Him...
 - We begin to be beautifully and totally dominated by Jesus...
 - We begin to have an influence on the people around us...
 - Our whole society begins to serve Him and to live for Him.

- It is a taste of heaven!

B. But you can also expect that there will be serious opposition when Jesus shows that He is Lord!

- People have to respond one way or the other when they see that Jesus is Lord.

B.1. At Ephesus, the opposition to Jesus was raised up by Demetrius the silversmith.

- He made a lot of money at Ephesus by making and selling these little silver shrines of Diana or Artemis.
 - It was a miniature model of her great temple at Ephesus with an image of her, inside.
 - People would buy these and dedicate them to her in the temple and then set them up in their office or their shop or their home.
- The gospel had had such a powerful impact at Ephesus that Demetrius's business was starting to feel the effects.
 - If it kept up, there would be no one to buy his little shrines!

B.2. You can see in verses 23 that this opposition is referred to as a great commotion about the Way—that is, of course, the *Way of Jesus*.

- Demetrius rounds up the craftsman's guild and gets them all stirred up.
 - He is honest enough to speak about what is most important to him and his fellow craftsmen first—
 - that they are going to lose business if this keeps up!
 - But then for conscience sake, he also throws in that
 - **Acts 19:27: "the temple of the great goddess Diana is in danger of being despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and world worship."**
- You have to love his accusation against Paul in verse 26:
 - **Acts 19:26: "This Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands."**
 - Imagine that!
 - Telling people that gods cannot be made with hands!
 - You can see how blind and how foolish men can be when they want to deny the truth...
 - What tangles they get themselves into!
- And you see that Demetrius is quite successful in getting the silversmiths all stirred up!
 - **Acts 19:28: Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"**
- They grab two of Paul's travel companions and take them into the great theater at Ephesus—
 - a facility where assemblies were held that seated about 25,000 (more than twice the size of the metro centre in Halifax)...
 - And Paul himself would have gone in if he had not been restrained...
 - not only by some of the disciples, but also, interestingly, by Gentile friends in high places at Ephesus who knew the danger.
 - There is a great uproar, and the Lord protected Paul from harm through his friends' restraint.

- B.3. Apparently the Jews are concerned that they will be identified with Paul...
- So they put forward a Jew named Alexander as their spokesman to declare to everyone that they have no association with Paul...
 - But as soon as the frenzied crowd realizes that he is a Jew, they all start chanting “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” and go on at it for two hours!
 - Luke’s comment about this crowd is great...
 - In verse 32, he says that the assembly was “confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together!”
 - Luke is showing us that opposition to the clear revelation of Jesus is ridiculous and cannot stand.
 - It never makes sense to try to deny that Jesus is Lord, especially after He has revealed Himself as Lord to a people.
 - But there are always those who attempt to do this.
 - Their volume can become so great that nothing else can be heard.
- B.4. But finally a voice of reason breaks into the confusion...well—sort of a voice of reason...
- The town clerk who was responsible for calling the assemblies at Ephesus—this meeting had not been called—and for maintaining order.
 - He reminds everyone that Diana is perfectly safe because nobody can deny that her image fell down from heaven from Zeus.
 - There is no need for all the commotion!
 - As it stands now, there are no particular charges for Paul and the others to answer to,
 - What, are you going to charge them with gaining a following by doing exorcisms and healings?
 - And even if there were charges,
 - they need to be brought forward in an orderly court of law...
 - and if it is a matter that requires a public assembly, it needs to be properly called.
 - He warns the crowd that...
 - **v. 40 “we are in danger of being called in question for today’s uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.”**
 - and then he dismisses the assembly in the way that everyone was accustomed to him doing whenever there was a proper assembly...
 - So they all depart and the matter is concluded.
- B.5. It is interesting that Luke ends in this way.
- Overall, I think he is making the point that there is no way to stop Jesus from taking dominion of Ephesus.
 - He is Lord, and He has come to establish His church there and nobody can stop Him.
 - When He decides to expose the inadequacy and the inferiority of whatever it is the people trust in (instead of God),
 - nothing can stand in His way.
 - He could do that among us today if He wanted to.
 - My friends, Jesus can do this whenever He wants—and He does do it whenever He wants.
 - He has done it time and time again in the history of the world...

- He goes into a place and He shows that He is Lord and that what they are trusting in cannot really help them...
- And people come and they believe and they cast off the futile things in their lives...
 - And those that try to oppose, end up looking very foolish...
 - They end up like Sceva and Sons and like Demetrius and his guild.

Conclusion...

- Let us pray earnestly that the Lord would bring His kingdom among us!
 - That the people around us would be able to see clearly how foolish it is to trust in what is not God...
 - And that we ourselves would see it and cast away whatever worthless things we are clinging to.
- This is how the Gospel spreads into the world and how God's kingdom flourishes among us.
 - The deception has to be exposed and the truth made manifest that Jesus is the Lord and that there is no salvation apart from Him.
 - That is when fear falls upon all and the name of the Lord Jesus is magnified!
 - That is when the Word of Lord grows mightily and prevails!
 - That is when whatever is not of God is supplanted.