

**Acts 19:21-41 ~ Teacher's Lesson**  
**Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey: Ephesus, B**

**Overview:**

1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey: 2 years, Cyprus and Central Turkey

2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey: 3 years, Greece

3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey: 4 years, Central Turkey (Galatia), Western Turkey (Asia), Greece.

**Review: What did Paul do for two years in Ephesus (19:8-10)?** After three months in the synagogue, he reasoned daily in the hall of Tyrannus, with the result that the word of the Lord spread throughout all of Asia (Western Turkey).

**Book Burning**

\*\*\*\***How did a failed exorcism help spread the Gospel (19:11-20)?** Unbelieving Jewish exorcists decided to invoke Jesus' name to cast out a demon. It backfired. Not only did the demon not come out, but he empowered the possessed man to beat up the exorcists. When Paul used the name of Jesus, demons were cast out. When the Jews used it, they were beaten by the demon-possessed man. This caused "all" to fear, both Jews and Greeks (19:17).<sup>1</sup>

This incident became well known, the name of Jesus was extolled, and many books of magic (spells, incantations) were turned in and publically burned.

**Joke:** What happens if you forget to pay your exorcist on time? You get repossessed.

**1. Any miracle is, by definition, extra-ordinary. In Ephesus, there were some extra, extra-ordinary miracles. According to 19:11-12, how extraordinary were the miracles that God enabled Paul to do?** The medical miracles Luke recorded were extraordinary enough to impress Luke, a physician by trade. A handkerchief or apron (likely used by Paul in tent making) had the power to heal a sick person or to cast out a demon.

**Example:** The Old Testament contains an account of a funeral that was interrupted by marauders (2Ki 13). Running for their lives, the corpse was quickly placed in a random tomb that just happened to contain the bones of the prophet Elisha. Upon contact with his bones, the dead man came back life. Remember the movie, *Runaway Bride*? This was a runaway corpse!

**God's Grace:** In this case, God seems to have condescended to accommodate people's superstitious, pagan beliefs for the purpose validating and spreading the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> These miracles no doubt had the effect of strengthening the church.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kistemaker, 688.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, 329.

**Limited Duration:** That these miracles were “extraordinary” suggests they were unique, not normative, and temporary.

**2. What convinced these Jewish exorcists that there was power in the name of Jesus (19:13)?** *See 19:11-12.* They saw the extra, extraordinary miracles and they saw Paul successfully casting out demons. Luke recorded this miraculous activity to explain where the Jewish exorcists got the idea of using Jesus’ name in their own exorcisms. They saw using Jesus’ name as sort of a magic formula or incantation. The problem was that they had no true understanding of who Jesus really was; for them to use Jesus’ name in dealing with demons was like a child playing with matches.

**What is an evil spirit (19:13)?** In the New Testament, “unclean spirit” and “demon” are used interchangeably in the same passage (Lk 8:29, 9:42) or in parallel passages, so there is no substantial difference between the two. (A demon is a fallen angel).

**Word Study:** “Exorcist” (19:13) is from *exorkisté*s; *ex* means “out of” and *horkizo* means to swear or implore. Thus, one who uses a formula to expel demons.<sup>3</sup>

**3. Why did the evil spirit have power over the seven sons of Sceva, but not over Paul (19:13-16)?** Paul had the Spirit and authority of Jesus. The Jews were unbelievers, and the demon knew it. They tried to use Jesus’ name like a magic incantation. They were impostors who failed due to unbelief.

**4. These men tried to cast out a demon “by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims” (19:13). When we pray, we often do so in the “name of Jesus”. What does it mean to do pray something in Jesus’ name?** According to Kistemaker, “The term name signifies the person, words, and works of Jesus, so that anyone who uses this name identifies completely with its bearer and becomes a true representative.”<sup>4</sup> **Example:** “Stop, in the name of the law”.

**5. How did this failed exorcism cause Jesus’ name to be extolled (19:17)?** There was a huge contrast between Paul’s successful exorcisms and the failed exorcism of the unbelieving Jews. Everyone understood this difference.

**6. What impact did both the successful and the unsuccessful exorcisms have on the Ephesian church (19:18-20)?** They confessed their continued dalliance with black magic and burned their expensive magic books. Just as some of the Corinthian Christians still did business with temple prostitutes, just as some Christians in Thessalonica were still thieves, so too in Ephesus some of the new believers still clung to the expensive books of spells.

**Application:** *What items do you have in your life that might need to be burned (19:19)? Devotion to the horoscope? Is it the type of music you listen to? Or are internet games an idol in your life? Or pornography? Or gossip? Do you steal from work (time, supplies, money)?*

---

<sup>3</sup> Thayer, #1845.

<sup>4</sup> Kistemaker, 688.

**ESV 2 Corinthians 5:10** . . . we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**ESV 1 Corinthians 3:13-15** . . . each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

**How much is 50,000 pieces of silver (19:19)?** This is hard to determine since the Greek simply says, "silver coins".<sup>5</sup> However much, it was substantial.

**7. Why were these books not sold, and the money given to the poor (19:19)?** See *John 12:1-6*. To have sold the books would be like a converted drug dealer selling his opium rather than destroying it. It was dangerous!

Incidentally, this same question was asked by Judas about the perfume the woman poured on Jesus' feet. Judas stole from the common purse and was concerned about the lost money, not the poor. As it was, Jesus replied that the poor will always be with us.

**What was the state of the church, according to 19:20?** God's Word continued to increase and prevail mightily!

-----

**\*\*\*\*Satisfied that his work in Ephesus was done, what four places did Paul purpose to go next (19:21-22)?** It was a zigzag route. Paul wanted to go west to **a)** Macedonia/Northern Greece (where the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea were), then south to **b)** Achaia/Southern Greece (where the church in Corinth, Athens and Cenchræe were), then east **c)** Jerusalem (in Palestine), and then finally way west to **d)** Rome (in Italy). Writing from Corinth to the church in Rome, Paul said:

**ESV Romans 15:23** . . . I have longed for many years to come to you,

**8. Why do you suppose that Paul sent Timothy and Erastus on ahead to Macedonia (19:22)?** One purpose for going to Greece was to collect funds that the churches there had raised for the church in Jerusalem, so perhaps he sent Timothy and Erastus on ahead to be sure the offering was ready.

### Riot in Ephesus

**\*\*\*\*9. Before Paul could leave Ephesus, a man named Demetrius caused quite a ruckus. Why was Demetrius opposed to the Gospel (19:23-27)?** Demetrius was a silversmith who made his living making silver idols of Artemis to sell as souvenirs to pilgrims. He feared that so many people would turn to Jesus that it would hurt his business. His concern was financial

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 691.

(as the old saying goes, “Follow the money”). However, he realized that the general populace didn’t care about a downturn in his personal business, so he also added that if present trends continued, Artemis might be deposed from her magnificence. This added the incentive of both civic and religious pride, and got the crowds stirred up.<sup>6</sup> (So too in politics today: there is often a publicly stated reason for something and that is different from the real reason for it).

**Summary:** Here we have a gathering of a trade union, called together by Demetrius, to deal with the problem of lost business due to the preaching of the Gospel.

**10. What was Artemis (19:23, 27)?** Artemis was a goddess. Her Roman equivalent was Diana. She was worshipped as the daughter of Zeus. The temple that had been built for her in Ephesus was the largest building in the Roman Empire, as long as a football field.<sup>7</sup> It was considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.<sup>8</sup> (The others were the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse of Alexandria, the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, Mausoleum of Halicarnassus).

**History:** The temple was destroyed in 268 A.D. in a raid by the Goths (an East Germanic tribe). Its exact location was lost until it was rediscovered in 1869. The main altar was unearthed in 1965.<sup>9</sup>

-----  
**\*\*\*\*What impact did Demetrius’ carefully crafted speech have on the craftsmen (19:28-34)?** They were filled with rage and rioted, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus.

**ESV 2 Corinthians 4:4** . . . the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel . . .

**Timing:** It is probably no coincidence that this riot took place right after the book burning. The church had won a major victory and so Satan counter attacked. Realize this; remember this.

**ESV Ephesians 6:12** . . . we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

**11. Why would they have rushed into the theater (19:29)? What movie was showing that everyone wanted to see?** This was a not a movie theater. It was an amphitheater. It was where civic decisions were made and so was the public place to convene.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> An inscription dating from A.D. 57 has been found in Ephesus that describes someone named Demetrius as “warden of the temple” (Kistemaker, 696).

<sup>7</sup> Steven J. Cole, “Lesson 47: Evangelizing, Empowering and Equipping (Acts 19:1-10)”, Bible.org. Accessed April 06, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> *New Bible Dictionary*, 88.

<sup>9</sup> David Guzik, “Study Guide for Acts 19”, BlueLetterBible.org. Accessed April 11, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> BAGD, 353.

**12. What stopped Paul from going into the theater (19:30-31)?** The brothers from the church would not let him go. Notice how Paul submitted to their advice. Some of the Asiarchs were friends with Paul and they also wanted to keep him out for his own safety.

**Word Study:** “Asiarch” (19:31) was a title for a man chosen to help administer the entire league of cities in Western Turkey. Only the wealthiest and most aristocratic citizens were chosen to be Asiarchs.<sup>11</sup>

Luke described this as “no small disturbance” (19:23). This must have been a very grave situation. Writing to the church in Corinth about his time in Ephesus, Paul may be referring to this riot, comparing the unreasoning mob to beasts:

ESV 1 Corinthians 15:32 . . . I fought with beasts at Ephesus . . .

Writing of his time in Asia, Paul further revealed:

**2 Corinthians 1:8-10** . . . we do not want you to be unaware . . . of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us . . .

**13. How does 19:32 illustrate that things were getting out of control?** Most of them did not even know why they had come together! **Joke:** Reading 19:32 reminds me of some deacon’s meetings I’ve been to!

**Word Study:** Luke described the gathering in the theater as an “assembly” (19:32). “Assembly” is from *ekklesia* and is normally translated as “church”. In the New Testament era, *ekklesia* was often used to refer to the meeting of a legislative body. These craftsmen gathered in the theater as a sort of trade union to decide what to do about the Gospel.

**Somehow a Jew named Alexander got caught up in the crowd and tried to speak. Why was the crowd opposed to him since he was a Jew and not a Christian (19:33-34)?** Since Luke described it as a “defense” (19:33), Alexander’s motive was probably to distance the unbelieving Jews from the Christians.<sup>12</sup> However, the crowd probably failed to distinguish between Christian and Jew, and furthermore, they knew that Jews did not have any use for idols either.

**Same Guy?** It is interesting that after Paul left Ephesus, he left Timothy behind, warning him about two different people in Ephesus named Alexander:

ESV 1 Timothy 1:19-20 . . . some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

---

<sup>11</sup> *New Bible Dictionary*, 97.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

ESV 2 Timothy 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

**14. Why might Luke have told us about Alexander (19:33-34)?** Luke may have recorded this incident about Alexander to show that had Paul entered the theater, he would not have been allowed to speak either. It would have been a useless risk of his life.

-----  
**\*\*\*\*How did God yet again use the Roman government to protect the Christians (19:35-41)?** The town clerk judged the theater “assembly” (19:32) to be more of a riot (19:40) and a “commotion” (19:40) and dismissed them.

**Divine Protection:** As in Corinth, Paul did not have to defend himself or the other Christians; the Roman government did it for him.

**Not Howard of Mayberry:** This town clerk was not like Howard Sprague, town clerk on the Andy Griffith Show. In the Roman province of Asia, the town clerk was the main magistrate in the city. This guy was more like Sheriff Andy Griffith! He had authority and commanded respect.

**15. What reasons did the town clerk give for the crowd to disperse (19:35-41)?** He said that everyone knew that Ephesus was the temple keeper of Artemis,<sup>13</sup> that no crime had been committed, and that they were in danger of being charged with rioting. He urged them to instead bring legal charges to courts and proconsuls and the “regular assembly” (19:39). The Romans were not big on vigilante action. They liked law and order.

**Insight:** Luke may have recorded the reasoning of the town clerk (and earlier of the proconsul Gallio in Corinth) so as to offer Christians reading Acts arguments to use when appealing to the government to defend them from mobs.

**16. What did the clerk mean by “regular” assembly (19:39)?** The NIV has “legal” and the NASV has “lawful”. It refers to the Roman civil government. This is in contrast to the *ekklésia* of the craftsmen (19:32), which had over stepped its bounds in trying to punish the Christians.

**17. The Greek word for “church” is *ekklésia*. The word *ekklésia* is found three times in 19:28-41, but is translated as “assembly” (19:32, 39, 41). How does this passage help us understand the Biblical meaning of the word church?** Demetrius called a meeting of the trade *ekklésia* to decide what to do about lost business. They went into the theater because that is where decisions were made. However, the town clerk informed the trade *ekklésia* that they had over stepped their jurisdiction. They were not authorized to take physical action against the Christians. Civil punishment was the jurisdiction of the “regular” (lawful, legal) *ekklésia* of the Roman government.

---

<sup>13</sup> The stone that fell from the sky was probably a meteorite (*ESV Study Bible*, 2128).

**Application:** The uses of this word show that the church is a decision-making assembly. It is authorized by the Lord to make decisions in conjunction with its elders.

**The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, Article VI, “The Church”:** “Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes.”<sup>14</sup>

### So What?

**18. Luke wrote this to a guy named Theophilus (1:1). What overall impression of Christianity would Theophilus have had at this point? What impression should you have?** Luke showed Theophilus that Christianity was not an unlawful religion (it was, in fact, the true fulfillment of Biblical Judaism). As such, it was entitled to the protection of the Roman government.

Also, this riot shows that, “When God’s kingdom advances, Satan must yield, but the prince of darkness does not capitulate without combat.”<sup>15</sup>

**19. What did the new believers in Ephesus do that indicted they were true believers? What has changed in your life since you believed?** They burned their magic books.

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

Stephen E. Atkerson  
NTRF.org  
Revised 04/15/2018

---

<sup>14</sup> “The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message”, SBC.net. Accessed April 05, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Kistemaker, 695.