

To The Ends Of The Earth

LESSON 19: PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY, PART 1 (ACTS 18:23-19:41)

Paul had now arrived back in Antioch, having completed his second missionary journey. As he had after his first journey, he spent some time with the church in Antioch. However, Luke's record quickly moves to a third journey Paul took.

APOLLOS IS CORRECTED AND TEACHES (ACTS 18:23-28)

18:23-28. After spending time in Antioch, Paul set out on a third preaching journey. He traveled back through areas he had previously visited to strengthen the disciples there (i.e. Galatia and Phrygia). Before describing Paul's journey, however, Luke introduces a man named Apollos who was a Jew from Alexandria (in Egypt), was eloquent (or learned), was knowledgeable of the Old Testament Scriptures, had been instructed to some extent about the way of the Lord, and was fervent (zealous). He arrived in Ephesus and began teaching accurately about Jesus (to the extent he understood). Perhaps this was limited to John the Baptist's teaching, as he only knew the baptism of John (which taught people the kingdom of God was near and they should repent and believe in the One who would come after him, Matthew 3:1-12; Acts 19:4). Aquila and Priscilla heard him teach in the synagogue, took him aside, and explained the way of God more accurately (completely) to him. Apollos apparently accepted and obeyed the gospel. The disciples in Ephesus commended him by letter to the disciples in Achaia (e.g. Corinth). There, he strengthened believers (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:5-6) and publicly refuted the Jews by demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah from the Old Testament Scriptures.

PAUL PREACHES IN EPHESUS (ACTS 19:1-20)

19:1-7. While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled to Ephesus (as planned, Acts 18:19-21). He found about twelve men who were disciples (perhaps disciples of John the Baptist or learners about Jesus according to the teachings of John). Yet, they were not saved men (as they had no knowledge of the Holy Spirit and had not yet been baptized into Jesus, v. 5). Paul asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed (perhaps the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, as in v. 6). However, they did not know the Holy Spirit. This raised an obvious question about what

they were baptized into (as true baptism involves the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:18-20; and was preached after the Holy Spirit's arrival, Acts 2). They responded that they had been baptized into John's baptism, which Paul said was a baptism of repentance, teaching people to believe in the One who would come after John (Jesus). Thus, it was no longer in effect. Their response was to be baptized according to the proper teachings about Jesus and into His name (into His possession, for the forgiveness of their sins, Acts 2:38). Thus, a person who has been taught incorrectly cannot be baptized correctly! Then, Paul (an apostle) laid his hands on these men so that the Holy Spirit came on them and gave them miraculous spiritual gifts (tongue speaking and prophecy), as only the apostles could impart (Acts 8:14-21).

19:8-10. Paul resumed his work in the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21), working there for three months. He was trying to persuade them concerning the kingdom of God (centering on Jesus as the Messianic King). However, when some became hardened to the truth and did not believe, they slandered the Way (John 14:6; Acts 9:1-2) in front of the crowds. Paul then took the disciples out of that environment and held daily teaching elsewhere (Acts 18:7) – in the school/lecture hall of Tyrannus (perhaps a place used by a man named Tyrannus for teaching). This work continued for two years. The result was that the word of God spread throughout all Asia (likely from the people Paul taught in this capital city taking God's word into other areas).

19:11-20. God worked miracles through Paul, even of a more extraordinary kind than "usual." Cloths that touched Paul's skin could be brought to those who were sick and possessed by evil spirits for them to be healed (Mark 5:25-29; 6:56; Acts 5:15). Some traveling exorcists (who apparently claimed the power to cast out demons) attempted to cast out evil spirits by the name of the Jesus Paul preached. There were seven sons of a Jewish man named Sceva (a high priest, perhaps a member of the high priestly family or someone who had claimed the title) who tried to do this. When they did, the man with the evil spirit jumped on, overpowered, and prevailed against them all so they ran out of the house naked and wounded. This became known throughout Ephesus, exposing them as frauds, and people became afraid, and Jesus's name was magnified! Consequently, many who believed confessed their previous deceptive "magical" acts and disclosed their practices (i.e. secrets) in front of many who had gathered. Many who had practiced magic burned their books of closely guarded magical secrets. These books were valued at 50,000 silver pieces

(perhaps the drachma, equivalent to a day's wage)! The word of God was spreading and prevailing in Ephesus!

A RIOT IN EPHEBUS (ACTS 19:21-41)

19:21-22. Paul determined to travel through Macedonia and Achaia, and go to Jerusalem (taking benevolence from various churches to help needy saints there, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Romans 15:25-27). After Jerusalem, Paul desired to go to Rome (Romans 15:22-29). He sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia ahead of him, while he stayed longer in Asia.

19:23-41. Around that time, a man named Demetrius started a major disturbance about the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9). He was a silversmith who (along with others) made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis (goddess of fertility, also called Diana). Ephesus was the center for worshipping Artemis, as something they claimed to have fallen from the sky was believed to connect with Artemis (perhaps a meteor that resembled her image). The silver shrines were evidently replicas of the temple (one of the ancient wonders of the world) that could be purchased and placed in people's homes (a lucrative business in Ephesus). Demetrius's disturbance was rooted in greed connected with Paul's message turning people away from worshipping idols (including Artemis). He stirred up the crowd in defense of Artemis. A mob scene ensued in which many who rushed into the amphitheater (estimated to seat 24,000+ people) dragged in Paul's traveling companions (Gaius and Aristarchus), and were confused about why they had assembled. The disciples (and some Asian officials who were Paul's friends) did not let Paul enter the fray, despite his wanting to go. A Jewish man named Alexander was pushed to the front and tried to give a defense to the people, but couldn't. The mob chanted about Artemis's greatness for two hours. Finally, the mob was quieted by a city clerk. Although he defended Artemis and Ephesus's role with Artemis, he reasoned against doing anything rash toward people who had done no wrong. Instead, he urged people to use the appropriate legal channels for settling disputes rather than be charged with unjustifiably rioting, and dismissed the assembly.

CONCLUSION

The gospel experienced great success in Ephesus through the work of Aquilla, Priscilla, Paul, etc. This became a hub for spreading the gospel throughout all Asia. However, the environment had now changed in Ephesus for Paul, and he would soon leave.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What was Apollos's error?

How was Apollos's error corrected?

What problem did Paul encounter with around twelve men in Ephesus and how was it resolved?

How did these men receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit?

Why did Paul use the hall of Tyrannus and what was accomplished through that work?

How were exorcists and magicians exposed as frauds in Ephesus and how did some react?

Why did a riot begin in Ephesus over Paul?

How did the riot end?

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