

Exciting Times In Ephesus

Acts is the story of the birth and growth of the early church. It provides a rich, accurate historical as well as spiritual description of the early believers.

PAUL'S THIRD JOURNEY



3rd MISSIONARY JOURNEY Reference - Acts 18:23 - 21:26 Duration - 4 years (Approx. 53-57ad) Total Miles Traveled - 2,515 1,190 by Sea • 1,325 by Land

After leaving Antioch, Paul traveled through the regions of the interior regions of what we call modern day Turkey and then returned to the great city of Ephesus.

Picture of Ruins of Ephesus

From here we encounter some strange and powerful events. Let's summarize these events with a series of words that begin with "P".

1. A Promise Fulfilled

Acts 19:1... *While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus.*

Paul was a man of character, integrity and dependability. He cared greatly for the disciples that he had made for God. If you look back to **Acts 18:21** you will find that he stayed in Ephesus for only a short while but then said...

Acts 18:21... *I'll come back to you again, if God wills."*

Paul followed through on his promise to these new believers to come back and continue to disciple them in their faith. This is a good point for us to note...we need to evangelize, but we also need to follow through on discipleship. Paul was a man who made promises but understood that only God can assure promises are kept.

2. A Problem is Revealed

Acts 19:1-4... ¹ *While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" "No," they told him, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."* ³ *"Then what baptism were you baptized with?" he asked them. "With John's baptism," they replied.* ⁴ *Paul said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the One who would come after him, that is, in Jesus."*

This is another strange and unusual passage that needs some explanation. You will note that this chapter begins with "*While Apollos was in Corinth*"...

Let me take you back a few verses to Chapter 18 as I did on the last point...

Acts 18:24,25... ²⁴ *A Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was powerful in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus.* ²⁵ *This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught the things about Jesus accurately, although he knew only John's baptism.*

We are now about 300 miles away from Corinth, Greece in Ephesus, Turkey. But we meet some people "*disciples*" (later in verse 7 we see they numbered 12) who seemed to be the same type of people as Apollos. They appear to be the remaining remnants of John the Baptist's disciples. Somehow they had been followers of John the Baptist and had been convicted of their sins and the need to be baptized, but this baptism was more of a preparatory cleansing in view of a coming Messiah. They were still 'waiting' it appears, and knew not of Jesus Christ and His baptism of the Spirit.

Sadly, many religious people live their lives without a true, genuine faith in Jesus and without the power of the Holy Spirit. That leads us to our next point.

3. A Provision is Given

Acts 19:5-7...⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak in other languages and to prophesy. ⁷ Now there were about 12 men in all.

These 12 ‘*disciples*’ (of John the Baptist background) were taught and made aware of the full truth of the Gospel Good News Story. With this truth they accepted Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord, were baptized, this time in genuine faith in the Name of the Lord Jesus. They were born again and to show the authenticity and power of their decision they began to speak in tongues. This verse has caused some concern and confusion about the need for speaking in tongues to verify salvation. There is also the question about the laying on of hands before their salvation. To address the laying on of hands, this is the only in Acts that laying on of hands accompanied baptism and it there is no evidence that it was a regular practice. This case is one of Four (4) times (3 specifically) that Speaking in Tongues was included in the salvation experience and each time it had a specific purpose of authentication of unique people group. Outside these Four unique events there is not a command or need for Speaking in Tongues to accompany or verify salvation.

The Four Events Include:

1. **Acts 2:4** – Where the Disciples of Jesus and the Church was authenticated as the true People of God.
2. **Acts 8:15** – Where the extending of salvation was verified for Samaritans. (*Though the Bible does not say specifically that they spoke in tongues, it appears that this may have been the case as Simon The Magician asked for this power to lay hands on people for them to receive the Holy Spirit*).
3. **Acts 10:46** – Salvation for the Gentiles verified.
4. **Acts 19:6** – The followers of John the Baptist salvation is verified, may also represent the final extension of salvation to include people from all the world.

The point is that Speaking in Tongues is NOT the Point. It is only a unique ‘specific time’ experience for authentication. Once salvation and the filling of the Holy Spirit for all people had been verified, there is no need for continuous verification.

The POINT is, salvation comes from repentance of sin, acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the subsequent permanent filling of the Holy Spirit followed by the visual sign of Baptism in obedience.

The **MAIN THING** is Jesus and the Holy Spirit power. That is the PROVISION provided to solve the PROBLEM of lostness. The PROMISE of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit had been fulfilled.

This Provision lead to the next point – POWER.

5. A Power is Manifested

Acts 19: 8-12...⁸ Then (Paul) entered the synagogue and spoke boldly over a period of three months, engaging in discussion and trying to persuade them about the things of the kingdom of God.⁹ But when some became hardened and would not believe, slandering the Way in front of the crowd, he withdrew from them and met separately with the disciples, conducting discussions every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.¹⁰ And this went on for two years, so that all the inhabitants of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the message about the Lord.¹¹ God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul's hands,¹² so that even facecloths or work aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists attempted to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I command you by the Jesus that Paul preaches!"¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.¹⁵ The evil spirit answered them, "I know Jesus, and I recognize Paul—but who are you?"¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them all, and prevailed against them, so that they ran out of that house naked and wounded.¹⁷ This became known to everyone who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. Then fear fell on all of them, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.¹⁸ And many who had become believers came confessing and disclosing their practices,¹⁹ while many of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in front of everyone. So they

calculated their value and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver. ²⁰ *In this way the Lord's message flourished and PREVAILED.*

The PROVISION of the Holy Spirit brings with it a POWER to do great and marvelous things. A unique function of the Holy Spirit is to bring POWER to the Word of God with the result that all opposition is overcome. In this passage we see a powerful, though unique to that time period display of healing and miracles. I fully believe in healings and miracles today, but it is obvious that during these early days of the church that God magnified his message and sought to show His authority as well as to authenticate the work of Paul and other Christians as His true spokesmen and people. As is common, along with displays of Power, Satan tries to Oppose and Protest God's work.

Starting in verses 13 we see the POWER OF GOD EXERCISED over some EXORCISTS!

There was a counterfeit group of Jewish men, Sons of Sceva, who wanted to cash in on the Miracles of Paul and tried to plagiarize the Power of the Holy Spirit to cast out some demons. In a rather bold yet humorous story, we see these men encounter a real demon possessed man who countered their request to leave with a bold "I don't think so" moment.. This demon spoke through the man and said, *Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but WHO ARE YOU?* The demon possessed man jumped on the seven with some *Demon Kung Fu* and beat them badly and ripped off their clothes as well. They were the 1st Streakers, I guess you could say. LOL.

The work of Paul and the other Christians made such an impact on the lives of some of the people that they began to stop practicing magic and burned their magic books. This shows us that when Jesus comes into our lives there should be evidence of change.

Well it didn't take long for the opposition of to Paul and the Holy Spirit miracles to stir up a major Protest.

6. A Protest is Mounted

Acts 19:21-41...

Time will not allow for us to read the entire passage, but I encourage you to take the time this afternoon to do so. In this section a man named Demetrius who was probably a leader of the local Guild or Union of Silver Smiths began a **PROTEST** against the Christian people. This protest was as much financial as it was cultural and religious. These silversmiths made a great deal of money from Religious Tourism. Ephesus was the center of Artemis goddess worship. This was a highly sexual based false god worship. It appears that Paul and the other believers were causing people to give up their pagan worship which seems to have included objects of silver as sacrificial gifts. He stirred up the crowd of people who shouted for two hours "*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians*". Finally, the City Clerk got them to calm down and dismissed.

The point here is that you can expect opposition when you are doing God's work.

However, the Power of God and the Holy Spirit is more than enough to bring victory.

7. A Personal Encouragement

Acts 20:1...*After the uproar was over, Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them, and after saying good-bye, departed to go to Macedonia.*

We close out with one verse from the next chapter. Paul gives his Personal Encouragement to the Church in Ephesus. Paul was the great encourager, he sets a great example for us to follow. The bottom line is that no matter what we may face, the Power of God's Holy Spirit is greater. As the bible verse says in **1 John 4:4...**
Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

In summary, we can glean from this chapter that no matter what problems, oppositions or difficulties may come to the believer. The **Power** and **Provision** of the **Holy Spirit** is more than enough to encourage us to stay faithful and to continue our calling which is...

To Be Powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story, Motivated by Love, & Empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Have you been truly saved, born again, filled with the Holy Spirit and been baptized?

Bible verses for Point 6 follow...

Acts 19: 21-41...²¹ When these events were over, Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. "After I've been there," he said, "I must see Rome as well!"²² So after sending two of those who assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

²³ During that time there was a major disturbance about the Way. ²⁴ For a person named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, provided a great deal of business for the craftsmen. ²⁵ When he had assembled them, as well as the workers engaged in this type of business, he said: "Men, you know that our prosperity is derived from this business. ²⁶ You both see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and misled a considerable number of people by saying that gods made by hand are not gods! ²⁷ So not only do we run a risk that our business may be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised and her magnificence come to the verge of ruin—the very one all of Asia and the world adore."

²⁸ When they had heard this, they were filled with rage and began to cry out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"²⁹ So the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed all together into the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's traveling companions. ³⁰ Though Paul wanted to go in before the people, the disciples did not let him. ³¹ Even some of the provincial officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent word to him, pleading with

him not to take a chance by going into the amphitheater. ³² Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing and some another, because the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³ Then some of the crowd gave Alexander advice when the Jews pushed him to the front. So motioning with his hand, Alexander wanted to make his defense to the people. ³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a united cry went up from all of them for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵ However, when the city clerk had calmed the crowd down, he said, "Men of Ephesus! What man is there who doesn't know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple guardian of the great Artemis, and of the image that fell from heaven? ³⁶ Therefore, since these things are undeniable, you must keep calm and not do anything rash. ³⁷ For you have brought these men here who are not temple robbers or blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸ So if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a case against anyone, the courts are in session, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹ But if you want something else, it must be decided in a legal assembly. ⁴⁰ In fact, we run a risk of being charged with rioting for what happened today, since there is no justification that we can give as a reason for this disorderly gathering." ⁴¹ After saying this, he dismissed the assembly.

Acts 20:1... After the uproar was over, Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them, and after saying good-bye, departed to go to Macedonia.