



GRACE COMMUNITY

CHURCH

huntsville

“Do You Believe In Magic?”

Acts 19

Introduction: “Why are we also in danger every hour? I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (1 Cor 15:30-32)

What are some major distinctions between Christianity and other world views that I can emphasize as I seek to fulfill the mission that God has given to his church?

3 Key Distinctions of the Christian Mission:

I. YOU MAGNIFY THE NAME OF JESUS (19:1-20)

A. Paul arrives in Ephesus and encounters twelve disciples of John the Baptist that were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (vv. 1-7).

- ❖ Although they were baptized into the baptism of John the Baptist, they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it is unlikely that these “disciples” were Christians.
- ❖ Luke may be contrasting this situation with that of Apollos (cf. 18:24-28), a follower of Christ only acquainted with John’s baptism but without need to be baptized again.
- ❖ Authenticating signs of the Spirit immediately followed this unique situation.

B. Now in Ephesus, Paul continued to proclaim the gospel, first in the synagogue and then in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (vv. 8-10).

- ❖ After three months of preaching in the synagogue, Jewish resistance once again caused Paul to withdraw and focus his preaching elsewhere for two years.
- ❖ The results were staggering as “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord.”

C. The word of the Lord grew mightily while the power of God was manifested in the Apostle Paul (vv. 11-20).

- ❖ Ephesus was famous (even in the ancient world) for every form of magic and for practicing the occult, not just in the pagan world but also among Jews.
- ❖ Jewish exorcists improperly use the name of Jesus and Paul in their work.
- ❖ Instead of stirring up confusion within an Ephesian people prone to a strong belief in magic, the name of Jesus was magnified, and many repented from magic practices.

II. YOU ARE PURPOSED BY THE SPIRIT (19:21-22)

Nearing the end of a lengthy stay in Ephesus, Paul decides to move on to Macedonia, Achaia, and then Jerusalem; he sends Timothy and Erastus ahead of him. He is compelled to visit Rome (vv. 21-22).

- ❖ There is some difficulty in the translation of the phrase “purposed/resolved in the Spirit (NASB/ESV).” Was does the verb mean? Was it Paul’s spirit or the Holy Spirit?
- ❖ Acts 20:22-23 gives an excellent commentary on this as Paul is “bound by the Spirit” on his way to Jerusalem and testified to by the “Holy Spirit” in every city. For more on the Spirit’s guidance in Acts, cf. 8:29, 10:19-20, 11:12, 13:2-4, 16:6-7, 21:4.
- ❖ In Romans 15:23-33, Paul writes of his desire to visit Rome, wanting to organize and initiate a planned mission to Spain. It also reveals that he was in process of organizing a collection for the believers in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor 16:1-4, 2 Cor 8-9).
- ❖ Paul sends two ahead of him to Macedonia. Paul’s journey there doesn’t begin until 20:1, after the riot of the Ephesian silversmiths near the end of his time in Asia.

III. YOU WORSHIP A COUNTER-CULTURAL GOD (19:23-41)

A. A commotion breaks out in Ephesus when many people switch their allegiance and begin to worship God instead of devotional Artemis idols which are not gods at all (vv. 23-28).

- ❖ Artemis was believed to be both the virgin protector of wild animals and their young but also the mother of all; she was regarded as the protectress of human young and the helper of women in childbirth. She was “Virgin Nature and Mother Nature deified.”¹ Paul was most definitely undermining her worship in his message.
- ❖ The instigator of the riot, Demetrius, reminds a guild of silversmiths that their prosperity was tied to idol manufacturing and sales, e.g., silver miniature replicas of the temple of Artemis and other related devotional idols.
- ❖ Paul’s teaching of Christ and the worship of Artemis were both major phenomena at this time, and they were on a collision course here in Ephesus.

B. The riot of the Ephesian silversmiths reveals the heart of so many who become slaves to their culture (vv. 29-34).

- ❖ Riled up by a combination of religious, patriotic, and commercial considerations (*sound familiar?*) in support of the cult of Artemis, two of Paul’s companions are seized, but Paul is spared from a potentially violent and life-threatening situation.
- ❖ Shouting, confusion, and lawlessness continue for hours, and the disorderly and agitated crowd fails to distinguish the Christian message from that of the Jews.

C. The city clerk gives a persuasive speech that calmly ends the riot and allows for Paul to safely leave Ephesus with the goal of visiting Macedonia (vv. 35-41).

- ❖ Though Paul was counter-cultural in his proclamation of the gospel and evangelism of Asia, he escapes safely in part because he did not publicly defame and needlessly offend the people in respect to their treasured goddess and temple.

¹ David Gooding, *True to the Faith* (1990; repr., London: Myrtlefield House, 2013), 415.