

Responsiveness & Riot

Acts 18:24-28; 19:8-41

Instruction in Ephesus

- ❑ On Paul's "third missionary journey"¹ he "traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples" (*Acts 18:23*). He eventually arrived at Ephesus. Prior to Paul's arrival at Ephesus, Apollos was there.
- ❑ Read Acts 18:24-28.
 1. What do we learn about Apollos? How is he described?²
 2. In what way is Priscilla and Aquila's response to Apollos a good example? In what way is Apollos' response to Priscilla and Aquila³ a good example?

Impact on Ephesus

- ❑ After arriving in Ephesus, Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue for three months (*19:8*),⁴ and "had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (*19:9b-10, NIV*).
- ❑ "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul" (*19:11*), but when Jewish exorcists⁵ tried to invoke Jesus' name, an evil spirit attacked them (*19:13-16*). This resulted in a reverent fear⁶ among the people. "Many of those who believed...came and openly confessed their [magical practices],"⁷ and a number of them publicly burned their books on magical arts (*19:18-19*).



¹ In Lesson 5, Paul was in Philippi on his "second missionary journey." Since then, Paul has returned to Antioch and started his "third missionary journey."

² The descriptions are mostly positive, but Luke adds, "...though he knew only the baptism of John" (18:15). What did Apollos lack? Interpretations vary. A similar question arises concerning the twelve "disciples" in Acts 19:1-7. When Paul asked them, "what baptism did you receive?", they replied, "John's baptism." (19:3). Some interpreters differentiate Apollos from the twelve, surmising that Apollos had received the Spirit while the twelve had not (19:2). Thus some say that Apollos was a Christian but the twelve were not (Romans 8:9). Others say that neither Apollos nor the twelve were yet Christians. If they were already Christians, what did they lack? They apparently lacked Christian baptism (19:5), but some would add the "baptism of the Spirit" in the Pentecostal sense. I do not agree with Pentecostal teaching concerning "baptism of the Spirit," though I do not deny sovereign outpourings of the Spirit, or fillings of the Spirit, subsequent to one's initial conversion. In any case, I lean toward the idea that neither Apollos nor the twelve were yet "fully Christian." Though Apollos "had been instructed in the way of the Lord" (18:25), his understanding was not necessarily "complete." Acts is a book of transition. Apollos' story may be the story of an Old Testament saint becoming a New Testament saint. While Apollos knew the baptism of anticipation (Luke 3:3-4), Priscilla and Aquila helped him to know the baptism of fulfillment. Much more could be said about the various interpretations of Acts 18:24-19:7. If you would like more information, or further discussion, let me know.

³ Priscilla and Aquila had earlier met Paul in Corinth, and Paul stayed and worked with them as tentmakers (Acts 18:1-3). Paul had undoubtedly instructed Priscilla and Aquila in "the way of God" and now they were passing it on.

⁴ Some of Paul's hearers hardened themselves, refused to believe, and spoke evil of "the [Christian] Way" (19:9a).

⁵ "exorcist" (*exorkistēs*) – a person who drives out evil spirits (demons). The Jewish exorcists tried to use Jesus' name in a magical way, but it did not work. To properly use Jesus' name is to operate under his authority.

⁶ They learned that Jesus' name must be revered. So "the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor" (19:17b).

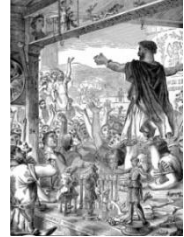
⁷ "evil deeds" (*praxeis*) – "practices" (ESV), in this context, practices of magical arts.

📖 “In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.” (19:20)

- ❑ The word of the Lord and the Spirit’s power greatly impacted many of the Ephesians. Believers confessed and renounced⁸ practices that conflicted with the Christian faith.
- 3. How does this story apply to believers today? What are examples of practices that believers should confess and renounce today?⁹ Why should they be renounced? How can we identify which practices should be renounced?

Uproar in Ephesus

- ❑ Read Acts 19:23-20:1. Demetrius was a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis – the major goddess in Ephesus.¹⁰ Demetrius was very concerned.



- 4. What was Demetrius concerned about? (19:25-27) What had led to these concerns?¹¹
- 5. As Demetrius and the crowd got very disturbed by the Christian movement in Ephesus, so people get disturbed today. Why do people and groups get disturbed by Christian influence in society today? (Are some of their concerns similar to Demetrius’ concerns?)
- ❑ The crowd was in uproar, but the city clerk calmed them down. He agreed with the crowd in their beliefs about Artemis, but he disagreed with their reaction. He advocated law and order, and a more reasonable approach to their concerns. Christianity cannot be blamed for riot.

Reflection/Application

- How has the gospel of Jesus Christ impacted you?¹² Have you been responsive, or resistant? Be willing to allow God’s word and the Spirit’s power to change your life.
- If you are a believer, review and apply question 3 to your own life. Each day during the next week, pray that your life would be greatly transformed by God’s word and the Spirit’s power.

⁸ “renounce” – give up, get rid of, refuse to have anything more to do with.

⁹ In Ephesus, magic practices were common. Magic and sorcery attempt to influence people and events by occult or supernatural means (“occult” refers to mysterious powers). These practices include divination, fortune-telling, witchcraft, channeling, necromancy, etc. However, the Bible prohibits and condemns such practices (Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 9:21; 21:8). Of course, magic practices aren’t the only practices that should be renounced. Answering question 3 may be controversial. What some Christians think is wrong and dangerous, others may think is harmless if not taken too seriously. Christians can overreact, but we can also slip into harmful beliefs and practices without realizing it if we are not careful. How can Christians protect themselves? We must keep Jesus Christ at the center of everything. We must pursue knowledge, guidance, and accomplishment in the ways prescribed in the Bible, while praying for Spirit-given understanding, discernment, and empowerment. We must guard against self-centered pursuits, and instead seek to live in a way that brings glory to God.

¹⁰ Artemis (daughter of Zeus and Leto, and sister of Apollo) was called Diana in Roman religion. Her huge temple in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

¹¹ Demetrius’s concerns were primarily economic, but also cultural and religious. Paul had taught that man-made gods were not really gods, which hurt the god-making business.

¹² All humans enter this world relationally separated from their Creator because of humanity’s sin. But Christ was sent into this world to die for our sins. “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18). He died, but he did not stay dead! He was raised from the dead, thereby defeating sin and death. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven of our sins, and brought into relationship with God – the Source of life and blessing. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have salvation and eternal life. This is the gospel.