

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 all the disciples" (*Acts 18:23*). Paul eventually arrived at Ephesus. Prior to Paul's arrival, a Jew named Apollos came to Ephesus.

1. Read Acts 18:24-28. 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 and persuasively in the synagogue for three months, but some refused to believe and spoke evil of the [Christian] Way (*19:8-9*). So Paul left them 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*).

3. "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul" (*19:11*), including expelling evil spirits. But when some non-Christian Jews tried to drive out evil spirits using Jesus' name, what happened?⁴ Read Acts 19:13-16.
4. Read Acts 19:17-20. When people learned of the interaction between the evil spirit (and man) and the sons of Sceva, how did they respond?⁵



Many believers "came and openly confessed [their magical practices⁶]," and a number of them publicly burned their books on magical arts (*19:18-19*).

¹ In Lesson 5 (*Acts 16:16-40*), Paul was in Philippi on his 'second missionary journey.' After leaving Philippi, he traveled through Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens (*Acts 17*) and then stayed in Corinth for some time (*18:1-18*). After leaving Corinth, he sailed to Ephesus (*18:18-21*) and eventually returned to Antioch in Syria (*18:22*). After spending some time in Antioch, Paul started his 'third missionary journey' (*18:23*).

² The descriptions are mostly positive, but Luke adds, '...he knew only the baptism of John' (*18:25*). What does this mean? What did Apollos lack? (A similar question arises about the 'disciples' in *Acts 19:1-7*. When Paul asked them, 'what baptism did you receive?', they replied, 'John's baptism' (*19:3*). However, Apollos's situation could possibly be different from the 'disciples' in *Acts 19:1-7*.) So what did Apollos lack? Interpretations vary. (For more information, ask Jay.) Anyway, this much seems clear: Though Apollos 'had been instructed in the way of the Lord' (*18:25*), his understanding was not 'complete.' Acts is a book of transition. While Apollos knew the *baptism of anticipation* administered by John (*Luke 3:1-4*), Priscilla and Aquila apparently helped him to know the *baptism of fulfillment* – that is, baptism in the name of Jesus, as proclaimed by Peter on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:38*).

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 These Jews (particularly, the sons of Sceva) tried to use Jesus' name in a magical way, but it did not work. Instead, it backfired! To properly use Jesus' name is to operate under His authority.

⁵ Verse 17 says, 'they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.' Their fear was not just a fear of the evil spirit but a reverent fear of the power of Jesus' name, which is *not* to be misused.

The word of the Lord and the Spirit's power greatly impacted many of the Ephesians. Believers confessed and renounced⁷ practices that conflicted with the Christian faith.

5. What are examples of practices that believers should confess and renounce today?⁸ Why should they be renounced? How can we identify which practices should be renounced?

Uproar in Ephesus

Read Acts 19:23-34. Demetrius was a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis – the major goddess in Ephesus.⁹ Demetrius was very concerned.



6. What was Demetrius concerned about? (19:25-27) What had led to these concerns?¹⁰
7. Demetrius and the crowd became very disturbed by the Christian movement in Ephesus. People still 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 (19:35-41). 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?¹¹ 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 5 to your own life. Each day during the next week, pray that your life would be deeply touched by God's word and the Spirit's power.

⁶ 'what they had done' (NIV) is translated from *praxeis* – 'practices' (ESV), in this context, practices of magical arts.

⁷ 'renounce' – give up, get rid of, refuse to have anything more to do with.

⁸ In Ephesus, magic practices were common. Magic and sorcery attempt to influence people and events by occult means ('occult' refers to mysterious powers). These practices include divination, fortune-telling, witchcraft, channeling (serving as a medium for spirits) and necromancy (communicating with the dead). The Bible prohibits and condemns such practices (*Deut. 18:9-14; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 9:21; 21:8*). Of course, magic practices aren't the only practices that should be renounced. Answering question 5 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 goals 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Demetrius's concerns were primarily economic (loss of income), but also cultural and religious. Paul had taught that man-made gods were not really gods, which hurt the god-making business.

¹¹ 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 also suffered once for sins, 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.