

## BIBLE SERIES: "EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

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### ACTS 19-20 PAUL IN EPHESUS: MIRACLE AT TROAS



In this study we will see Paul founding the church in Ephesus, one of the largest congregations he would raise. Ephesus was a major port, just as Corinth, but on the opposite side of the Aegean Sea. Paul would stay there longer than any other city--for nearly three years.

Barclay explains about Ephesus: "She was a center of pagan superstition. She was famous for charms and spells called 'Ephesian Letters.' They were guaranteed to bring safety on a journey, to bring children to the childless, to bring success in love or business enterprise. From all over the world people came to buy these magic parchments which they wore as amulets. The greatest glory of Ephesus was the Temple of Artemis. Artemis and Diana were one and the same, Artemis being the Greek name, Diana the Latin. This Temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was 425 feet long by 220 feet wide by 60 feet high. There were 127 pillars, each the gift of a king. They were all of glittering Parian marble and 36 were marvelously gilt and inlaid. The great altar had been carved by Praxiteles, the greatest of all Greek sculptors. The image of Artemis was not beautiful. It was a black, squat, many-breasted figure, signifying fertility; it was so old that no one knew where it had come from or even of what material it was made. The story was that it had fallen from heaven."

Paul returned there, fulfilling his promise to the Ephesian Jews interested in listening to him, that he would come back after visiting Jerusalem on the previous Pentecost (Acts 18:19-21).

Luke writes, "And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:8-10).

Notice the essence of what Paul taught was about "the things of the kingdom of God." So he taught primarily about the coming kingdom of God with its returning Messiah, Jesus Christ, and how one could be a part of that future kingdom.

After a while, some Jews rejected Paul's teachings at the synagogue and became hostile, so he moved his place of teaching. Also notice one of the names of Christianity is "that Way," because it truly was a new way of life. His message became so popular it became known throughout the region.

Barclay notes, "When work in the synagogue became impossible because of the embittered opposition, Paul changed his quarters to the hall of a philosopher called Tyrannus. One Greek manuscript adds a touch which sounds like the additional detail an eye-witness might bring. It says that Paul taught in that hall from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Almost certainly that is when Paul would teach. Until 11 a.m. and after 4 p.m. Tyrannus would need the hall himself. In the Ionian cities all work stopped at 11 a.m. and did not begin again until the late afternoon because of the heat. We are told that there would actually be more people sound asleep in Ephesus at 1 p.m. than at 1 a.m. What Paul must have done was to work all morning and all evening at his trade and teach in the midday hours. It shows us two things--the eagerness of Paul to teach and the eagerness of the Christians to learn. The only time they had was when others rested in the heat of the day and they seized that time. It may well shame many of us for our talk of inconvenient times."

Luke continues, "Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, 'We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.' Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?' Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." (Acts 19:11-17).

Here we have the basis for the church principle of using anointed cloths to take to the sick. Since Paul was busy working and teaching almost every day, there were times when he could not go to the sick and so the brethren would take pieces of cloth from Paul's clothing to the sick or spirit-possessed and they were healed, similar to Peter's shadow which had previously healed some (Acts 5:15).

Next, seven itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to copy Paul by using Jesus' name to cast out a demon, but since they didn't have the faith in Jesus, the demon overpowered them and they fled.

Luke relates, "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."

This confirms what was known about Ephesus, a great pagan city steeped in witchcraft and idolatry. But when some of them heard Paul's message and saw the miracles, they repented of their evil works and instead believed in the Gospel.

The account continues, "When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.' So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.' Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, 'Great is

Diana of the Ephesians!' So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: 'Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.' And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly" (Acts 19:21-41).

This is typical of the fanaticism of worshippers of the "queen of heaven"--in her many guises. In fact, "the Virgin Mary" was proclaimed as the "divine mother" at the Council of *Ephesus* in 431.

So Paul is persecuted by the makers of Diana's statues who were losing their business. Statue-making of favorite religious figures is still popular today in many parts of the world. But this all goes against the Second Commandment which prohibits making religious figures of any person. In Ephesus, thankfully, the city clerk, who in reality was the

chief civil officer who represented the Ephesians' interests before the Roman provincial officials, intervened and quelled the mob.

Luke relates, "After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi *after the Days of Unleavened Bread*, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days" (Acts 20:1-6).

So Paul goes on the road to visit the churches in Macedonia and Greece. Then, when He was about to finish this trip and return to Antioch, he learns of a Jewish plot against him and decides instead to revisit the churches in Macedonia.

At Philippi, Paul and Luke stayed during the Days of Unleavened Bread, which in Acts, Luke uses to mean the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 12:3-4). It clearly shows Paul and Luke kept these Feasts of God. As *The IVP Commentary* brings out, "They spend the week in Philippi for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread." By the way, this wasn't an incidental mention of these days because Luke is counting the fifty days until Pentecost, when Paul would again be in Jerusalem (Acts 20:16). So here are *two of God's Feasts* mentioned in just one chapter.

From there Paul travels the 150 miles to meet his companions in Troas and where Luke records a remarkable incident, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing

him said, 'Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.' Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted" (Acts 20:7-12).

Here is the sole mention in Acts of the first day of the week. Some commentators try to use it to support Sunday keeping, yet the account makes clear they only met "to break bread," not to have a religious ceremony. Breaking bread is the common term for having a meal. Also, they met on Saturday night (according to the Jewish reckoning of the day starting in the evening) for "there were many lamps." So it was natural after the Sabbath for the brethren to have a church social with Paul, where he could speak more to them and they could prepare a late meal. But above all, Luke records this incident because of the great miracle that occurred then, when Eutychus was resurrected after having died from his fall from the loft, similar to what Elijah and Elisha had done (see 1 K. 17:21; 2 K. 4:34-35). After Paul embraced Eutychus, the young man came alive. Afterward, they had a meal with much rejoicing and Paul spoke to them until dawn, when he left. So this text can't be used legitimately to justify Sunday-keeping. Besides, we should remember that Sunday was *at that time a full work day* and not a rest day throughout the Empire. Only the Sabbath was a rest day accepted by Rome for Jews and later for Christians.

Luke recounts, "Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost" (Acts 20:13-16).

Here again we see Paul and Luke diligently observing God's calendar, with its Sabbath and Feast days. It can't be clearer to those who sincerely want to see the truth of the matter.