

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 19:21-33 | Session 54 | Uproar in Ephesus

A.D. 56

Things we know from chapter 19. 1) Paul is in Ephesus speaking to the Jews about the kingdom of God (vs. 8). 2) The Jews did not believe his message so he left the synagogue and began teaching daily in the school of Tyrannus. 3) Paul performed special miracles among the Ephesians (vs. 11,12). 4) Certain vagabond Jews tried to mimic Paul, but were overcome by an evil spirit (vs. 16). 5) Because of this, the word of God grew (vs. 20).

Verse 21,22—

**Paul purposed in his spirit.** The word **spirit** is *pneuma* which could mean his own spirit, or, as many translations capitalize the word (see ESV and NASB), it could mean the Spirit of God. The KJV translators have left it up to us to interpret. The NIV translates this as “Paul decided to go to Jerusalem” and I tend to lean toward that translation. We should be careful of trying to spiritualize every single action someone makes in the Bible, or in our own lives. God has given us a free will and He allows us to exercise that will. This seems to be Paul’s own desire, wanting to go back through Macedonia and Greece and then on to Jerusalem, and finally, **Rome. I must also see Rome** is in the active voice—it is something *he* is going to do, not something the Holy Spirit is *causing* him to do. He sends **Timotheus and Erastus** ahead of him, but he remains in Ephesus.

Verse 23—

**There arose no small stir about that way.** **Stir** is the Greek word *peri* which means around; Trouble is brewing or circulating in the city around **that way**. This is probably referring to the kingdom of God that Paul had been preaching. That message or gospel concerned Jesus the Messiah coming back as King of kings, and it would have been a threat to the Roman religion that the emperor was the king. Another King is coming to usurp the throne of Rome? Paul was preaching only one Deity was to be worshipped and this was also a threat to the idol worship in Ephesus.

Verse 24,25—

Luke names a **certain...Demetrius** which might indicate he was well known. As a silversmith he was probably highly influential and likely brought a lot of profit to the trade and the city, not only in Ephesus but all over Asia. He not only managed his own business, but he employed many others. Excavations in Ephesus have uncovered many shops. **Demetrius** called a meeting of tradesmen and the main subject was, *we are in danger of losing our wealth*.

Verse 26—

**Paul**, though not present, was the center of attention in the meeting. Word of Paul’s preaching had reached **Demetrius** from all over **Asia** and the rumor was **Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying they be no gods, which are made**

**with hands.** We might remember in Acts 17:29, Paul had challenged the makers of idols in Athens.

Verse 27—

**The great goddess Diana.** The Greek word is *Artemis*. The KJV translators used the latinized form. *Artemis* or **Diana** worship was the primary cult of Ephesus (as noted there was also emperor worship). Products depicting **Diana** were a major export item for the city’s economy, i.e., **our craft is in danger to be set at nought, the temple of...Diana...despised...her magnificence...destroyed**. Not only in Ephesus but **all Asia and the world**. In other words, we are going to be put out of business.

Verse 28—

It doesn’t take much to get a crowd riled up. The meeting apparently has erupted in **wrath** and has spilled out into the streets where the craftsmen are shouting **Great is Diana of the Ephesians**. Sort of like the *Black Lives Matters* chant of the day!

Verse 29,30,31—

As **the whole city was filled with confusion**, the crowd was looking to take their anger out on someone. While they don’t find **Paul** they chase down and **capture Gaius and Aristarchus...Paul’s companions in travel**. They would do for the time being, and they **rushed with one accord into the theatre**. Paul wasn’t avoiding the crowd, and when he saw what had happened to his friends, he would have **entered the temple**, but **the disciples suffered him not**. This was a wise decision. We should listen to wise counsel instead of just saying “Well, I’m in God’s hands, it is what it is!” The Lord is not our magic ticket out of all our troubles. In this world we will have suffering and tribulation. Wise counsel can often keep us from heartache. And even more of Paul’s friends, **certain chief of Asia** got word Paul wanted to go into the theatre and sent word to him **not to adventure...into the theatre**.

Verse 32—

Shouting and unruly crowds were as common then as they are today. **Some...cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly** (Greek: ekklesia) **was confused**. And like in a riotous crowd today many don’t even know what they are protesting.

Verse 33—

**Alexander** was probably a leading member of the synagogue. This is another indication Paul was teaching the kingdom gospel. **Alexander** tried to make **a defense** for Paul. This could be the same **Alexander** who later does much harm to Paul (See 2 Tim. 4:14, however Alexander was a common name). But once the crowd finds out he is a Jew he doesn’t get a chance to defend Paul. Instead, the frenzied crowd **for about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians**.