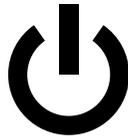


8

CLASH OF POWERS AT EPHESUS

ACTS 19



Paul had spent a day or two in each of the Galatian churches—a few days in Philippi, a few weeks in Thessalonica, a day or two in Berea, and a few days in Athens. Then he was eighteen months in Corinth. Now, climactically, he is in one of the major centers of the Mediterranean world—Ephesus—the hub of the great trade routes of the world, full of culture and money, temples and politics, soldiers and merchants, and slaves. Everything we know of Ephesus points to it being a center of social and civic as well as spiritual and religious power. Perhaps this is why Luke begins the story of God’s work in Ephesus with details of a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

PAUL AND THE BAPTIST’S FOLLOWERS (19:1-22)

1. Read Acts 19:1-7. What is missing in the lives of the disciples that Paul finds in Ephesus¹? How is Acts 1:8 continuously being fulfilled?

2. What difference in your life would it make if the Holy Spirit were not present? What does the Bible say about the ministry and purpose of God’s Spirit in our lives? (See: Gal 5:22-23; John 14:26; 15:26; Rom 8:5-6; 1 Cor 3:16; Gal 4:6)

¹Some Ephesians who’d become **FOLLOWERS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST** knew that John pointed beyond himself to Jesus (John 1:29). They knew of Jesus’ ministry, his life, death, and resurrection, but not of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and its significance. These believers were in a kind of salvation-history “time-warp”, as if they were still in Acts 1. The gift of tongues in verse 7 is evidence that they’d received the gift of the Holy Spirit, as promised.

3. In verses 13-16, how do the exorcists misunderstand the power of God? What does the evil spirit's remark reveal?
4. Read verses 17-20. Why do you think the humiliation of the exorcists had such a sweeping effect?²

PAGANISM IN EPHESUS (19:23-41)

5. Why do the silversmiths see Paul and his message as a threat (vv. 23-27)?³ Does the gospel present a similar threat today? If so, in what way?
6. Describe the scene Luke provides for us in the amphitheater in verses 29-34. What do you see, hear, and think? How would you have felt in that moment?
7. How is the power of God evident to you and/or others in your life. List as many examples as you can think of? How does Scripture teach we experience God's power in our lives? (See: 2 Pet 1:3; Jam 5:16; 2 Tim 1:7; 2 Cor 12:9)

²It's possible that the **SONS OF SCEVA** were Jews who, living in pagan territory for a long time, had developed a kind of hodgepodge religion comprised of pagan cult worship, magic arts, and Judaism. Paul's ministry demonstrated that the power of the name of the Lord Jesus is stronger than every competing power that opposed it in Ephesus. The gospel does indeed provide power, but it's not magic. Magic seeks to gain power without paying the price of humble submission to the God who made us.

³**ARTEMIS** is the Greek name for the Roman goddess Diana. She was considered the most powerful divinity in the region. The temple of Artemis was massive and her cult—run entirely by female officials—was the religious center of Ephesus. Archeologists have uncovered dozens of images of Artemis around ancient Ephesus.