

# The Founding of the Church At Ephesus

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## Acts 19

Paul visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey. He did not stay long, but he promised to return if the Lord willed (18:18-21). Now, on his third missionary journey, he keeps his promise and spends three years there establishing the church (20:31).

The church at Ephesus holds a prominent role in the New Testament. Sixty-seven verses in Acts deal with Paul's ministry at Ephesus, more than any other city (with the possible exception of Jerusalem or Antioch). Paul wrote a pivotal epistle to this church. The Apostle John also wrote to this church in Revelation 2:1-7.

Also, keep in mind that Aquila and Priscilla, and Apollos had already been teaching at Ephesus before Paul returned. One plants, one waters, and now it is time for Paul to reap the harvest.

### I. **CORRECTING the uninformed** (vs. 1-7)

- Probably disciples of Apollos before he left Ephesus for Corinth (v. 1).
- They "*believed*" (v. 2), but it doesn't say what they believed. Most likely it was the "*gospel of the kingdom*" that John the Baptist preached. All these disciples knew was what Apollos knew before he was enlightened by Aquila and Priscilla (18:24-26).
- This is another case of men following the light they had and in due time God gave them more light.

#### A. Paul's INQUIRY (v. 2).

1. Paul's question in verse 2 has no bearing on a Christian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because every Christian receives the Holy Ghost when they believe on Christ (Rom. 8:9).
2. If they been baptized with the right baptism, they would, of course, have known about the Holy Spirit for His name is part of baptismal formula (Mt. 28:19).

#### B. Paul's INSTRUCTION (vs. 3-4).

1. What is "*John's baptism*" (v. 3)? There are seven different baptisms in the Bible. "*John's baptism*" is not the same as the baptism of a church age convert. The local New Testament church baptizes a new

believer following salvation. However, John was the forerunner of Christ and baptized those that came to him prior to the cross—  
*"...that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus"* (v. 4).

2. *"John's baptism"* was limited to the days **before Christ's coming** *"after him"* (see John 1:29-31). After Christ came and was crucified and rose from the dead, a new baptism took place—Church Age baptism. This baptism **did not look ahead** to Christ's coming to be our Redeemer, as did John's baptism. Christ has already come as our Redeemer. Rather, it **looked back** to His redemptive work already accomplished at Calvary and by His resurrection from the grave.
- C. Disciples IMMERSED—*"When they heard **THIS**"* (v. 5)— that they were to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—presumably they acted upon this new information, believed and were re-baptized following their salvation—  
*"When they heard **THIS**, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."* You might picture a gap of missing information following *"this"* indicating that they were not simply hearers of the word, but doers also. They heard *"this,"* trusted in the Savior, and then followed Him in believer's baptism.
- v. 6—"Tongues" as a sign to Jews (v. 8) that these received the Holy Ghost.

## II. **CONTENDING with the hardened** (vs. 8-10).

- A. Returning to the SYNAGOGUE (vs. 8-9). During Paul's first brief visit to Ephesus on his second missionary trip, he reasoned in the synagogue (18:19-21). Now he has returned to resume where he left off.
1. He spoke with POWER (*"spoke boldly"*). If it is truth, we need not be ashamed or hold back.
  2. He spoke with PERSISTENCE (*"three months"*). Sometimes it takes a long time to break through hardened hearts (and heads).
  3. He spoke PERSUASIVELY (*"disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."* cf. 26:28; 28:23; 1 Cor. 5:11). There is nothing wrong with arguing for the truth.

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SUBJECT OF PAUL'S SPEAKING—"The Kingdom of God." It involved (1) a government (dominion); (2) a King on a throne; (3) His subjects; and (4) it's governing laws. Christ is the King Who will sit on David's throne. The subjects are God's people—Israel in a physical sense, believers in a spiritual sense. The Constitution (laws) is God's Word.

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- *"...hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way..."* — The Gospel will either soften or harden a person's heart.

B. Reasoning at the SCHOOL of Tyrannus (vs. 9, 10).

1. The OPPOSITION (v. 9). When people cannot be reasoned with (hardened), and speak evil of God's message to discourage others from believing, it is time to move on to someplace else.
2. The OPEN DOOR (v. 10 cf. 1 Cor. 16:8-9). When God shuts one door (the synagogue), He opens another. Evidently, Tyrannus invited Paul to come to his school and debate with his students regarding Christ.
  - ➔ Greater opportunities—Paul's rejection from the synagogue only served to **expand** the ministry of the Gospel in greater ways:
    - *"Daily"* versus once a week on the sabbath day in the synagogue.
    - *"Two years"* versus three months in the synagogue.
    - All Asia versus Ephesus only.

### III. CASTING out the devils (vs. 11-17).

- A. Apostolic power (vs. 11-12)—As an Apostle, Paul had power to cast out devils.
- B. The exorists (vs. 13-16)— An exorcist is a professional who casts out devils. They were copying Paul's ministry to make a living.
  1. They were **without authority** (v. 13).
  2. They were **without recognition**. (v. 15). Devils know (experientially) Christ and Paul (v. 15). There are no atheist devils. A question we should ask ourselves, "Do the devils know us?"
  3. They were **without success** (v. 16).
  4. They were **overcome and injured** (v. 16). Demonic power—Demon-possessed people have supernatural power.

### IV. CONFLAGRATION of the "curious arts" (vs. 17-23).

- Genuine revival—When real revival "hits" a community things get "stirred up" (v. 23). The following things will be evident—
  - A. God is feared (v. 17).
  - B. The Lord Jesus Christ is exalted (v. 17)
  - C. Sin is confessed (vs. 18, 19).
  - D. Satanic items are destroyed (v. 19). "*Curious arts*" is the occult. Peoples lives are changed. Note: In a real revival, everything in the "house" where people live gets converted. Revival is costly.
  - E. God's Word is spread (v. 20). When the corrupt books are put down (v. 19), God's Book is picked up!

Verse 21— Paul's purpose to go again to Jerusalem was NOT in the perfect will of God (cf. 20:16, 22; 21:4, 10-14; 22:18, 21; 25:9-10). We will study this in more detail in Acts 21.

## V. **CONFLICT with the craftsmen** (vs. 23-41)

- A. The CAUSE of the conflict (vs. 23-28).
  1. The craftsmen's **gain** was threatened (vs. 23-25). Dwindling sales!
    - Image makers were called "*craftsmen.*" (First mention of a "labor union" in the Bible.) This will be a world-wide enterprise in the Tribulation period (Dan. 8:25; Hos. 13:2; Rev. 18:22).
    - "*...there be no gods which are made with hands.*" The religion business' profits were effected (vs. 24-28; 1 Tim. 6:10).
    - Even the heathen put their pocketbook ahead of their false gods (v. 27). Their god is their belly. When the craftsmen cried out, "*Great is Diana...*" what they really meant was, "Great is our income!"
    - v. 25— Source of wealth (Dt. 8:18; John 19:10-11).
  2. The craftsmen's **goddess** was threatened (vs. 26-27). Dwindling crowds.
    - "Diana" (v. 27) was worshipped world wide



under various names: Venus; Aphrodite; Mary; Ashtaroth; Istarte. She was Sun and Moon goddess. Fertility symbol—Rows of breasts denoting her as the mother of all living (v. 35—“image of Diana”).

- Diana’s temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was made of pure marble with 127 columns 60’ high. It was 425’ by 220’ and seated 25,000-30,000. Took 220 years to build. Hosted gladiatorial combat, plays, debates. It was destroyed in 206 AD.



- B. The CONFUSION in the conflict (vs. 29-34).
1. The presence of "confusion" (vs. 29, 32) proved the whole ordeal was contrary to God (1 Cor. 14:33).
  2. Confusion is the result of having two conflicting authorities.
  3. A case of "the blind leading the blind." Notice the statement "*the more part knew not wherefore they were come together*" (v. 32).
- C. The CHANTING in the conflict (vs. 34). **Vain repetitions!**
- D. The CALMING of the conflict (vs. 35-41).
- vs. 35-36—The town clerk starts by appealing to their pride (lip service for Diana). Sometimes it is best to remain silent (v. 36 cf. Amos 5:13).
  - vs. 37-39—A word of legal procedure. The "churches" mentioned here (v. 37) are not Christian churches, but pagan churches.
  - v. 40—A word of caution. Rome did not like riots among their cities.

**SUMMATION** (20:1): Paul recognized his effectiveness at Ephesus was over for the time being and moved on.