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Acts 19

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Acts 19.

Topics.

- The Holy Spirit came on them, they spoke in tongues and prophesied.
- The ability to speak in tongues.
- Paul speaks about the Kingdom of God in a synagogue
- The School of Tyrannus.
- Sons of Sceva attempt to cast out an evil spirit.
- Jesus, I know and Paul I recognise, but who are you?
- Many who practiced magic burned their books in the sight of all Ephesians.
- Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul stayed in Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla, but because of strong Jewish opposition Paul went to the Gentiles. He stayed eighteen months with Titus Justus and many of the Corinthians believed. Then the Jews made a united attack on Paul so he with Priscilla and Aquila set sail to Syria they arrived in Ephesus where Priscilla and Aquila explained the way of God more accurately to Apollos who then refuted the Jews showing from the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. Paul visited Antioch and travelled throughout the region strengthening the disciples. (Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

ACTS 19:1-7

The Holy Spirit came on them and they Spoke in Tongues and Prophesied.

- **Acts 19:1-7:** And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ²And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³And he said, "Into what then were you baptised?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴And Paul said, "John baptised with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.

John's Baptism: in Ephesus Paul comes across about twelve men who have heard the message of John the Baptist, repented and been water baptised, yet they have not received the Holy Spirit, in fact they have never heard any teaching about the Holy Spirit and added to this they don't even know if there is a Holy Spirit so what does this all mean? To find the answer we have to understand that John's message was: -

- Make straight the way of the Lord, because after him comes the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:23-30).

Christ had not yet been revealed to the world; thus, John's message and baptism was about people preparing and making themselves ready for the coming Messiah by repenting and being water baptised. Paul confirms this by saying:

- John baptised with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus (v4).

Paul then lays hands on the twelve and the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. The baptism of the Holy Spirit resulted in the disciples being able to speak in a language other than their own native language which those who spoke that language understood.

The ability to speak in tongues: tongues, means a language different from a person's own native language or previously unknown to the speaker. During the earlier ages it was common for the introduction of many of the older Bibles to begin by saying:

Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the former
Translations diligently compared and revised by
His Majesty's special command A.D 1611.

Both the Greek and the English words tongue and language can refer either to the organ of speech in our mouths or the language that is spoken thus the reason languages is often referred to as tongues, i.e., it is the organ (the tongue) that is speaking the language. The following two verses show that the Bible uses the word tongue and languages interchangeably showing that the word tongue simply means language, Luke writes:

- Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his *own language* (Acts 2:6 KJV).

Then in verse eight Luke states:

- And we hear every man in our *own tongue* wherein we were born?

These two verses (there are many others) clearly show that those listening understood what those speaking in tongues were saying and that it was a proper language.

NOTICE: they weren't confounded because they couldn't understand what the people were saying, but because they heard them in their own language which those speaking had never learned and yet they understood what they were saying. No one has to speak in tongues to be saved to eternal life. During the time of the apostles the purpose of speaking in other languages that a person had not learned, but others who did speak it clearly understood was to evidence to the unbelieving Jews that God was now pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, meaning Jews and Gentiles alike. Up until this time God only ever poured his Spirit out upon faithful Jews and it was only ever faithful Jews God inspired to prophecy so when the unbelieving Jews heard the Gentiles prophesying and praising God in their own languages it was a sign to them that God was accepting Gentiles into His Kingdom. For further information concerning speaking in tongues, see: Acts 2 in Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

ACTS 19:8-12

Paul speaks about the Kingdom of God in a Synagogue.

- **Acts 19:8-12:** And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. (School of Tyrannus) ¹⁰This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. ¹¹And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

After spending three months reasoning about the Kingdom of God in an Ephesian synagogue Paul then spends two years in the hall of Tyrannus teaching the word of the LORD every day to Jews and Greeks who came from all over Asia during which time God was doing extraordinary miracles so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched Paul's skin were carried away to the sick, and all kinds of diseases and sicknesses left them.

The apostle's generation was unique: though God never changes the way His Spirit moves on earth to achieve His eternal plan does. In the Old Testament God moved mightily through Moses and in a different way through David and Solomon then in a unique manner God's Spirit moved through the prophets. During the era of the apostles God's Spirit was moving on earth through the apostle's faith in Christ in a miraculous fashion in a manner that God has not done with any previous or future generation. This was a unique time on earth as was the era of Moses, David, Solomon and the prophets.

Christ was the sower of the Gospel seed, now God through the apostles is multiplying the seed Christ has sown in them. This generation did not have a full collection of New Testament Scriptures so God to authenticate the apostles teaching confirmed their ministry with stunning miracles that only men with God's Spirit flowing through them could possibly do. The people of this era were living in a time when God's Spirit was flowing through the apostles in such a majestic fashion that they were able to miraculously heal every kind of mental illness, physical disability, disease and sickness as Jesus did, simply by speaking the word.

They did not need mood music to prepare people to receive something from God as some ministers in churches today do. It did not matter what the environment was or even what faith or the lack of it those the apostles healed had, they simply spoke and the sick person was stunningly and instantly healed. Added to this wonder there are instances when the faith of those who the apostles healed was not even involved and many never even asked to be healed but were healed simply because the apostles saw the sick person's plight and out of their compassion spoke the word and healed them.

The school of Tyrannus: from time Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and began to use the techniques of Roman paganism (temples, priests, pagan holidays etc.) to institutionalize Christianity most people have completely ignored one of the methods that Paul used when he went about church planting. Today recent movements have begun to try and recapture the ancient way of doing church, believing the Constantinian transition was not an improvement, but that it was ultimately destructive to church life and practice. Many involved in church restoration today see Paul's methods as extremely simple and essentially free of structure; just encourage people to meet in homes, release gifts and live life in community. Each of these elements has been very helpful, but some have neglected a necessary piece of Paul's strategy.

The missing element: the following are the two different methods of planting a church that exist today:

1. The traditional method of establishing a weekly worship service in a church building.
2. To ignore buildings and have weekly meetings in homes.

But in both these formats there is a third element that is missing which Paul used with tremendous success. The clearest glimpse of this missing element that Paul used when he wanted to plant churches in a city is found in Acts 19. Luke records that after Paul abandoned his original method of working through the local synagogue, he rented space in the public School of Tyrannus and held daily discussions there for about a two-year period. This is most likely what he was doing in Synagogues

before this time and we know this was what he did during his house arrest in Rome (Acts 28). Paul used his space in the public School of Tyrannus as a daily discipleship center which had constant activity flowing through it and he complimented these public gatherings by having training and fellowship meetings in individual house churches (Acts 20:20).

The primary focus in a city should not be on the churches themselves, but on discipleship training through discussion.

To establish this third element of church planting and long-term faith means that the primary focus in a city would not be on the churches themselves but on discipleship training through discussion. Discussion-based training needs to replace sermonizing as a means to a long-lasting faith-building group discovery experience. In our modern society saturated with information readily available at the press of a key there needs to be a transition of each lesson from lecture format to discussion-based sharing, not only will people learn the word of the Lord this way but they are also fellowshiping with one another while doing it and as a result will grow together since they are learning not only the Scriptures, but about each other. A second great benefit that results from this type of meeting is that people's needs are often revealed while discussing the Scriptures so those within the meeting can then respond accordingly.

ACTS 19:13-20

The Sons of Sceva Attempt to Cast Out an Evil Spirit.

- **Acts 19:13-20:** Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus, whom Paul proclaims." ¹⁴Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognise, but who are you?" ¹⁶And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

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Itinerant: (Vagabond in KJV) carries the idea of a person veering or strolling away or wandering around and about.

Exorcist: means to bind by an oath (or spell), to exact an oath by bewitchment, summoning, entreating or by charming a person, it also carries the idea of materialising or calling someone up (to ask, appeal, plead, implore, request and beseech).

Evil: refers to the essential character it applies to a person that plots and is hurtful to others in effect or influence or to one who is wicked and fails in moral duty.

Sceva: (Skeuas) is of Latin origin and refers to a Jewish man who was a chief priest living in Ephesus with his seven sons who were exorcists. The Jews although scattered throughout the Roman world, remembered their ancestry. Priests were probably then as now singled out for honour in the synagogue, but because there were only synagogues in Asian Minor, Sceva could not have been an officiating high priest.

The Sons of Sceva: the fact these sons of Sceva are referred to as itinerant (vagabond in KJV) implies they were outside the normal Jewish sect.

NOTICE: the words the sons of Sceva used to cast out the evil spirits "I adjure you by the Jesus, whom Paul proclaims" (v13) these men had no idea who Jesus was, is it any wonder their words had no power the anger

and fury in the man overpowered all seven sons, no doubt they tried to restrain him but his phenomenal strength was such that he ripped their clothes wounded their bodies and they fled in fear for their lives.

Jesus, I know and Paul I recognise, but who are you? The words, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognise, but who are you?" (v15) Shows that this man had heard of Christ and of Paul and seems to imply that even though he had some form of mental disturbance and illness he respected and held Jesus and Paul in high esteem and recognised them as men of God, but obviously had no knowledge or respect for these seven sons of Sceva who from his perspective most likely appeared to be imposing their will onto him for their own glory rather than out of compassion for the miserable mental state the man is in.

Evil spirits, demons, mental illness and sickness: the people of Jesus day believed anyone with a mental illness or a sickness they did not understand was possessed by some evil demon god. The Bible is naturally written according to what the people of this generation believed, we know this because throughout the New Testament even blindness and deafness are said to be caused by demons dwelling in the sick person. Anything the people did not understand they believed to be caused by inferior evil demonic gods they called demons thus the reason Luke writes, "The evil spirit answered them," even though it is the spirit of the troubled man and not an evil god (often called a demon) dwelling in him.

In 2005 a courageous English blind girl about 25 years old pioneered schools for the blind in Tibet, because she was angered at the way the blind were often treated because the people still believed blindness was a result of demon possession. Her schools would take the blind in and show them love, kindness and care in contrast to the rejection they experienced by much of Tibetan society because of their mistaken belief that blindness is a result of evil gods called demon dwelling inside a person.

NOTE: these people believed in a female goddess named Artemis to such an extent they built a temple to her that became one of the Seven Wonders of the World and they spend two hours shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (v34) rather than listen to men reason with them, so it should not surprise us that they had other belief systems that had developed over centuries of superstition. or further information see the titles:

- Demons.
- Devil.

Both titles are in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Fear fell upon all Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus: since Sceva was a chief priest in Ephesus the events of his seven sons running from a man everyone believed was possessed by an evil spirit quickly spread amongst Jews and Gentiles throughout the surrounding area and the name of Jesus was exalted in Ephesus. Remember at this time God was pouring out his Spirit in an amazing and awesome way through Paul people were touching his skin with handkerchiefs and aprons and taking them to the sick and not only were they being healed of their diseases but evil spirits came out of them as soon as they were touched by these handkerchiefs and aprons (v12).

NOTE: evil spirits in this context refer to mental illness being healed.

Many who practiced magic burned their books in the sight of all Ephesians: during Jesus and the apostle's generation there was no such teaching as evolution which denies the existence of God. Almost everyone believed in either the God of the Bible or in some form of pagan god. Obviously many Gentiles who had accepted the word of the Lord had come out of pagan faiths, occults and practices of magic etc., but even though they had accepted Christ they had held onto their pagan books, but seeing

what happened to the sons of Sceva they came out confessing and divulging their practices and burned their pagan books which totalled over to fifty thousand pieces of silver and the word of the Lord increased mightily.

Following are two things that should be noted in this story:

1. These people were not being coerced or forced to burn these books but rather chose from their own free will to destroy what had led them into a false religious system and pagan practices.
2. They were not burning what belonged to others these books were their property to do with as they would.

NOTE: at this time one piece of silver was equal to a day's wages so this is the equivalent of 50,000 days' work or 136 years.

ACTS 19:21-34

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

- **Acts 19:21-34:** Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." ²²And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. ²³About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship." ²⁸When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹So the city (Ephesus) was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theatre, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. ³⁰But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theatre. ³²Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defence to the crowd. ³⁴But when they recognised that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Artemis: (Diana in KJV) in Greek mythology Artemis was one of the principal goddesses, counterpart of the Roman goddess Diana. She was the daughter of the god Zeus and Leto and the twin sister of the god Apollo. She was believed to be the goddess of hunting, of fertility, of childbirth, of nature, and of the harvest. As the moon goddess, she was traditionally identified as the friend and protector of youth, especially young women. Like Apollo, Artemis was armed with a bow and arrows, with which she often punished mortals who angered her, while in other legends, she is praised for giving young women who died in childbirth a swift and painless death. The ancient temple of Artemis on the west coast of Turkey in Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Many pilgrims bearing gifts ranging from statues of the goddess to gold and ivory jewelry came from miles around to worship Artemis known by the Ephesians as the goddess of fertility.

NOTICE: the worship of Artemis was not limited to the Ephesian people only; her veneration was so vast that Luke writes:

- She whom all Asia and the world worship (Acts 19:27).

gods made with hands are not gods: Paul determines to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome, so he waits in Ephesus for Timothy and Erastus to arrive, but because he had been teaching that, "gods made with hands are not gods" (v26) the business of Demetrius a silversmith was losing money since people throughout Asia were not buying his silver shines so he gathers other business men who were also making themselves wealthy from the people's worship of Artemis. They all feared that Paul's influence could topple the entire religion of Artemis and bring her temple to nothing so to combat Paul's influence they hold a meeting in a theatre and proclaim the magnificence of the goddess by crying out "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (v29). Being successful business men they had great influence in the city so there was enormous confusion. The crowd drag two of Paul's companions (Gaius and Aristarchus) into the theatre probably hoping they could explain what was happening, but the crowds were in such a frenzy even when Alexander tried to bring calm the people like little children simply repeatedly shouted for two hours:

- Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

Thus, the reason the brothers would not allow Paul go into the theatre (the frenzied and hysterical state this crowd was in they would probably have torn him apart).

The temple of Artemis destroyed: Paul missionary visit to Ephesus was around 57 A.D. Though he had only very limited success at this time in 262 A.D., the temple of Artemis was destroyed during an invasion by the Goths and never rebuilt because Christianity had taken hold and the temple was no longer deemed important.

NOTICE: the teachings of Paul are referred to as, The Way (v23).

ACTS 19:35-41

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The Town Clerk quietens the Crowd.

- **Acts 19:35-41:** And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? ³⁶Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious (Robbers in KJV) nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." ⁴¹And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

Sacrilegious: (Robbers in KJV) in this context refers to people who spoil or robs temples and churches

Blasphemers: refer to people who speak evil, criticise and profane a thing or defame something held dear.

NOTICE: the extreme superstition of even the city officials, the Ephesians not only believed that their city was the keeper of the temple of the great goddess Artemis, but also of a sacred stone that fell from the sky and to emphasis the reality of this the town clerk states:

- No-one can deny these things (v36).

During Roman rule if a city was seen to be rioting a legion of soldiers would march upon that city to restore order, naturally this would mean death for some thus the towns clerks warning of being charged with rioting.

Ephesus had the following three institutions for dealing with complaints:

1. **Courts:** for complaints that regard unlawful activity.
2. **Proconsuls:** a senior administrator with broad powers in a nation recently invaded and under the control of the invader's armed forces, who were charged with pacifying the population, restoring vital services, and establishing new governance
3. **Assemblies:** assemblies to deal with religious and spiritual matters.

The town clerk tells Demetrius, the craftsmen and anyone else who had a complaint to take it to the proper authority instead of stirring up the entire town.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace