

Ministry in Ephesus **Acts 18:23 - 19:41**

Introduction

Paul's second missionary journey had taken him through Syria, Cilicia, Galatia, and Phrygia. He visited and strengthened the churches which had been started in those regions. He followed the call of the Holy Spirit into Macedonia where he received much persecution as he preached the gospel in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

Paul was finally forced to leave Macedonia. He journeyed to Athens where he preached to the philosophers and wealthy council. Some believed, but there is no record of a church being started there. His next stop, Corinth, was a break in the routine travel. He stayed there over a year. He then travelled back to his home church in Antioch.

Paul rested and then went on his third missionary journey. His plan was to visit the Galatian and Phrygian churches for the third time and to keep his promise to return to Ephesus (Acts 18:21). He stayed in Ephesus for over two years. The gospel message was spread throughout Asia. Paul also wrote his first letter to the Corinthians while he was there.

There are four stories about the time Paul spent in Ephesus: 1) the great speaker Apollos, 2) the twelve Ephesian disciples, 3) the Jewish **exorcists**, and 4) the angry silversmiths. These stories will help us to see how very successful Paul's ministry was in Ephesus.

Outline of Acts 18:23 - 19:41

- I. Apollos is Corrected - Acts 18:23-28
- II. Ephesian Disciples Corrected - Acts 19:1-7
- III. Paul's Preaching Continues - Acts 19:8-12
- IV. Paul's Ministry Conflicts with Paganism - Acts 19:13-41

I. Apollos is Corrected-Acts 18:23-28

Apollos was a Jewish man from Alexandria in Egypt. He was educated and spoke boldly about God. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures well. When he arrived in Ephesus, he used his knowledge to speak in the synagogue at Ephesus.

Priscilla and Aquila were also in Ephesus. They had travelled there from Corinth with Paul. When they heard Apollos speak, they realized that he did not know the full story about Jesus. His teachings were correct, but he only knew about the baptism of John. He did not know about Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection, and he did not know about the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. Priscilla and Aquila took time to teach him all that Paul had taught them. Apollos' knowledge was complete. This is how it should be in the church. Christians should always try to *speak the truth in love* (Ephesians 4:15) and help other believers grow in their faith. Who can you help to grow in faith?

With his instruction complete, Apollos was sent to Achaia (specifically to Corinth) with letters of recommendation. He was a great help to the believers there, strengthening the work which Paul had started. His education and willingness, along with the Holy Spirit, enabled him to debate the Jews and answer all their arguments. He used the Scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

II. Ephesian Disciples Corrected-Acts 19:1-7

Paul began his third missionary journey by going through Galatia and Phrygia. He wanted to encourage the churches he had established in those provinces (Acts 18:23). Then, he traveled west through the province

of Asia to keep the promise he had made to return to the Jews in Ephesus if God willed.

Soon after arriving in Ephesus, Paul met twelve men whom he **perceived** to be disciples. To make sure that their knowledge and faith were complete, Paul asked them, *Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?* He learned that they had not even heard that the Holy Spirit had been given. (They probably knew about the promise of the Holy Spirit. John had taught that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. They just did not know that the promise of the Holy Spirit had been fulfilled.) The men had received the baptism of John the Baptist, *a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* (Luke 3:3), but they had not been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. These disciples were like Apollos. They were believers who needed more instruction because their knowledge was incomplete.

The men were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and Paul laid his hands on them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit which was proven by their speaking in tongues and prophesying.

III. Paul's Preaching Continues - Acts 19:8-12

Paul continued to minister in Ephesus for three months without **opposition**. His message was *the kingdom of God*. This would include the Lord Jesus Christ, His **advent**, death, resurrection, and exaltation. This was the same message Jesus taught (Matthew 4:23; Luke 8:1; Acts 1:3).

Some of the Jews hardened their hearts, refusing to believe Paul's message. As a result, Paul and his disciples moved to the school of Tyrannus. This move was good for at least two reasons: 1) Paul could preach every day, not just on the Sabbath, and 2) both Jews and Gentiles could listen to his teaching.

Paul continued teaching in Ephesus for two more years while the surrounding area was evangelized. It was during this time that

churches were started in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hieropolis (Colossians 1:2 and 4:13).

During his ministry in Ephesus, God confirmed Paul's work and words with miracles, just as He had done with Peter (Acts 5:15-16). The sick were healed and evil spirits were cast out.

IV. Paul's Ministry Conflicts with Paganism - Acts 19:13-41

Some travelling Jewish exorcists had heard Paul preach about Jesus and seen Paul perform miracles in Jesus' name (as Peter did in Acts 3:6 and 9:34). They happened to be in Ephesus and tried to copy what Paul did. A man named Sceva, who claimed to be a chief priest, had seven sons who practiced exorcism. When Sceva's sons used the name of Jesus, their plan backfired on them. The man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and sent them running for their lives, naked and wounded. The name of Jesus cannot be used magically!

The story spread quickly through the city of Ephesus. It was clear that the name of Jesus was not to be misused. Jews and Gentiles were filled with new honor and respect for the name of Jesus.

Another wonderful act came from this event. Some of the converts who had not stopped practicing magic came forward and confessed. They had thought they could be Christians and still hold on to their pagan ways. The event with the sons of Sceva put the fear of the Lord in them. They publicly abandoned their magic and burned their pagan books. *So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed* (Acts 19:20).

Paul had decided to leave Ephesus. He planned to go back through Macedonia and Achaia to visit the churches and take up a collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem. (See Acts 24:17; Romans 15:25-26 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.) Then he would go to Jerusalem to deliver the offering. After that, he wanted to go

to Rome. Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus, co-workers in ministry, ahead to Macedonia to prepare the way. It was at this time that a problem arose with the local silversmiths.

Demetrius made his living crafting and selling silver **shrines** of the goddess, Artemis (Diana). He realized that he was not selling as many shrines because of Paul's ministry. Knowing his business could be ruined, Demetrius called together all the silversmiths of the city, along with others business owners who's sales were being hurt by Paul's teachings. He presented his case: *Paul is saying they are not gods which are made with hands*. Demetrius added that Paul's teachings were making Artemis out to be *regarded as worthless* (NASB). His fellow workers, who depended upon the worship of Artemis for their livelihood, were filled with rage and cried out *Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!*

The whole city was filled with confusion and rushed to the theater because it was the largest place in the city for public assembly. The theater in Ephesus held 25,000 people. Along the way they grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus, two of Paul's traveling companions. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. Paul was eager to go into the theater and speak, but *the disciples would not allow him*. The Jews in the crowd wanted to say that they had no connection with Paul and the Christians. They sent a man named Alexander forward to speak to the people, but, when the people found out he was a Jew, they refused to listen and shouted together for two hours, *Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!*

The city clerk was in charge of the city and spoke on the city's behalf to the Roman governor. When he spoke, the people listened. He calmed the crowd by agreeing with them about the importance of Ephesus and the greatness of Artemis¹. Gaius and Aristarchus (Acts 19:29)

¹ The city of Ephesus was guardian of the temple of the great goddess, Artemis. Her image, which was believed to have fallen from heaven, was kept behind a purple curtain in the magnificent Temple of Artemis. The temple is one of the Seven Wonders

were proclaimed innocent. The clerk said that anyone who had a valid complaint should follow legal procedure through the courts.

The clerk exhorted the unruly crowd to think reasonably. The silversmith trade and the goddess worship was not really in danger of losing its popularity (19:27). The real danger was that the citizens of Ephesus might be charged with rioting, a crime that Rome did not tolerate. With order and calm reestablished, the people were sent home. †

Prayer

Ask the Lord to help you increase in knowledge of Him, and ask Him for the opportunity to help others grow in their knowledge of Him too.

Memory Verse

Acts 19:20 *So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*

Vocabulary

exorcist - a person who is believed to be able to cast out the devil or other demons

perceived - to have an awareness or understanding of something

opposition - resistance or hostile action

advent - the coming of Christ starting with his birth

shrine - a sacred object for a deity; idol

of the Ancient World; its foundations and great altar have been uncovered by archaeologists and can be seen today.

Questions for Acts Lesson 16

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Review last weeks lesson and notes.

1. What did you learn in Acts 19 that was new or interesting?

2. a. Name one thing that would have encouraged Paul while he was in Ephesus.

- b. Name one thing that might have discouraged him.

DAY TWO: Read Acts 20:1-12.

3. List the places Paul visited next and find them on a map.

In verse 1: _____

In verse 2: _____

In verse 6: _____

4. Fill in the blanks. Before leaving _____, Paul spoke to the disciples on the

_____ day of the week. He continued speaking until _____.

5. a. What happened to the young man named Eutychus? (verse 9)

- b. What did Paul do?

- c. Who did a similar thing in:

1 Kings 17:17-22? _____

2 Kings 4:32-37: _____

- d. ★(Memory Question) Who else do you remember in the Book of Acts who restored a dead person to life?

DAY THREE: Read Acts 20:13-27.

6. a. As Paul sailed to Jerusalem, why did he avoid stopping at Ephesus even though it was on the way?

- b. What did Paul do when he arrived in Miletus?

7. Acts 20:18-35 records Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders. From verses 9-27, circle the statements which are true of Paul's teaching.

Paul taught humbly with tears. Paul only taught Jews.

Paul only taught in the synagogue. Paul taught about the kingdom of God.

Paul taught the whole counsel of God.

8. a. What had the Holy Spirit been testifying to Paul as he traveled from city to city?

- b. Did this make Paul fearful? Explain your answer using verse 24.

9. a. When did Paul say he would see the elders again? _____

- b. From Acts 20:38, how did the elders feel about this? _____

DAY FOUR: Read Acts 20:28-38.

10. a. According to Paul, what responsibility had the Holy Spirit conferred upon the elders?

- b. From verse 31, give two things the elders were to do.

- c. From verse 35, give one thing the elders were to remember.

11. From verse 32, give two things that the word of God is able to do.

12. Mark each statement below T (true) or F (false) and make corrections in the false statements.

(T or F) After Paul spoke, he knelt and prayed with the elders.

(T or F) All the elders wept and gave Paul money.

(T or F) The thing that gave the elders greatest sorrow is that they knew Paul was sick.

13. ♥(Heart Question) Paul's speech and the elders' response were expressions of their love for one another. Who will you express your love to this week? How will you do it?

DAY FIVE: Read Acts 21:1-17.

14. What stood out to you as important in Paul's visit to Tyre?

15. a. Where did Paul stay in Cesarea? _____

b. ★(Memory Question) What do you remember about this person from past lessons?

c. What did Paul learn from Agabus while he was in Caesarea?

d. How did Agabus, Paul's companions, and the people of Cesarea persuade Paul to change his mind about going to Jerusalem?

VOCABULARY FOR ACTS LESSON 16

*"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."*
— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the vocabulary words.

exorcist - _____

perceived - _____

opposition - _____
advent - _____
shrine - _____

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word / phrase that means the same thing.)

perceived - overlooked.....noticed observed
opposition -conflict harmony peace
shrine tribute..... holy gift..... idol

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.

exorcist

a person who is believed to be able to cast out the devil or other demons

perceived

to have an awareness or understanding of something

shrine

resistance or hostile action

opposition

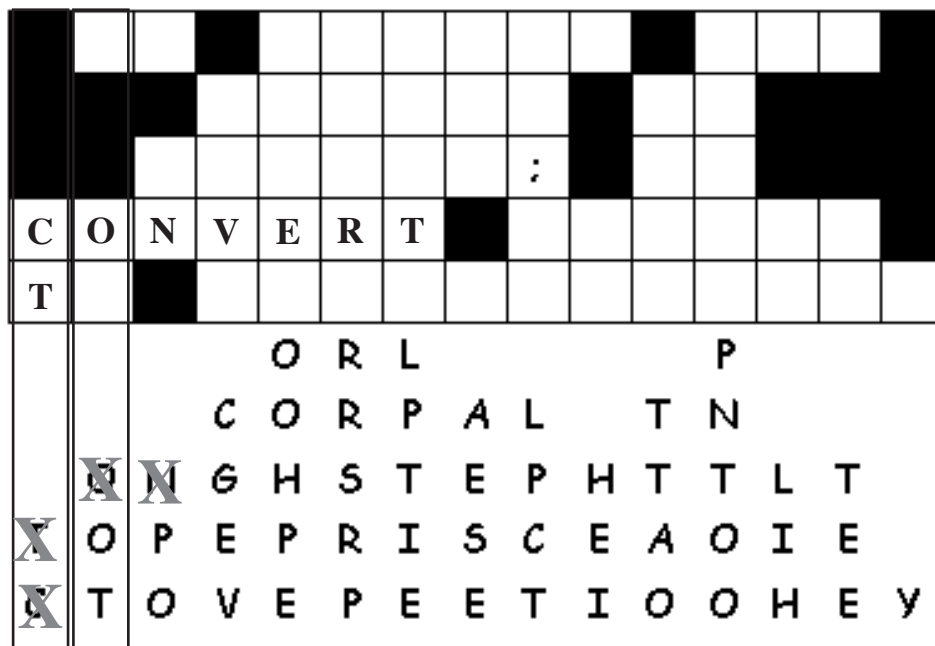
the coming of Christ starting with his birth

advent

a sacred object for a deity; idol

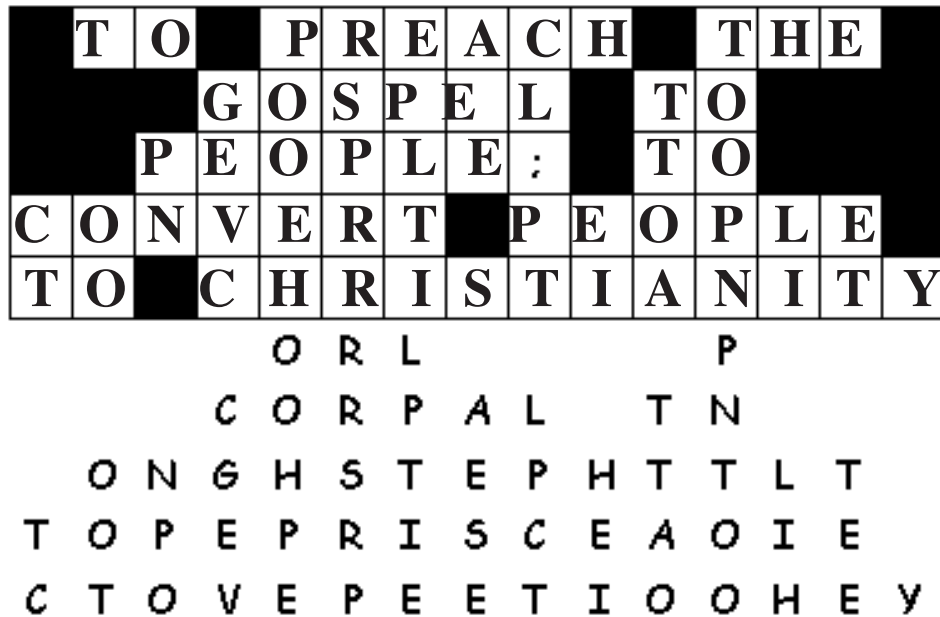
DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words.

DEFINITION:



WORD: _____

ANSWER KEY



to preach the gospel to people; to convert people to Christianity

EVANGELIZE