

ACTSFACTS

C@G Supplementary Study Notes for ACTS

Message #45

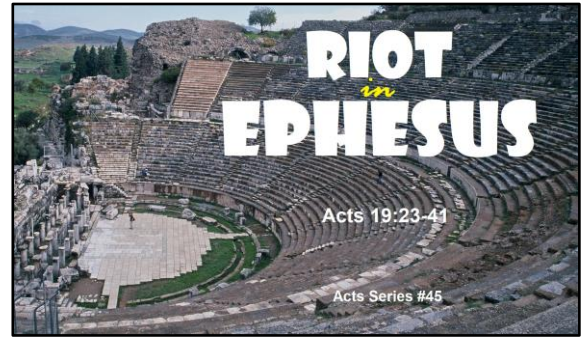
“RIOT in EPHEBUS”

(Acts 19:23-41)

Paul is in the middle of a very fruitful period of ministry in Ephesus, exemplified by the large numbers of people who were converted to Christ out of their superstitious and occultic background (19:18-20). However, this did not mean that it was a time of peace and ease. Paul never seemed to be far from the centre of controversy or danger. In fact, the more fruitful the ministry, the more severe the attacks.

In Acts 19:21-22, Paul outlined his plans for travel and ministry after he left Ephesus. However, he decided to stay in Ephesus for a while longer.

If Paul was so keen to move on and eventually go to Rome, why did he stay longer in Ephesus? (see 1 Cor.16:8-9)



In Acts 19:21 Paul revealed his strongly-held desire to travel to Rome. From this point on in the Acts story, this desire seems to be an underlying theme. Of course, he eventually got to Rome, but not when, or how, he might have initially planned.

In 1 Corinthians 16:9 we see a summary of Paul's time / ministry in Ephesus: **Opportunity & Opposition**. There was incredible opportunity to shine the light of Jesus Christ in the very dark place of Ephesus. And, as we have already seen, Paul's proclamation of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ was very effective and many people were coming to the Lord....being brought out of the darkness into God's wonderful light (**1 Peter 2:9**). But this brought out much opposition and most of it was from a religious source.

Over the years that Paul spent in Ephesus he encountered and contended with three types of religious opposition.....

1. INADEQUATE RELIGION (19:8-10)

The Jews (Paul's first port of call whenever he arrived somewhere) largely held on to their Old Testament teachings, but ignored the purpose of them, that is, to point to the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ). So much so that they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, they rejected Him and had Him killed.

Thus, the religion they held on to was an empty one. Traditions, rituals, and religious "form"...but no life.

Paul offered them a vital, thriving relationship with God through Jesus Christ, but most of them preferred to hold on to their empty religion.

Can you think of any examples of "inadequate religion" today?

2. IMITATION RELIGION (19:11-20)

The seven sons of Sceva (19:13-16) had seen the power in the miracles that were done by/through Paul in the name of Jesus and, so, when they had opportunity to "use" the name of Jesus for their own purposes they did so. They were imitators, but they did not know the One whose name they were appropriating for their own use. Of course, it did not turn out well for them.

How do people try to "use" the name and person of Jesus Christ for their own purposes today?

3. IDOLATROUS RELIGION (19:23-41)

This is what Paul encountered with the cult of the fertility goddess, Artemis. Ephesus was the centre of the worship of this popular goddess and many people made a living out of this false religion/god. The success of the ministry of Paul was a threat to this religious "industry" and conflict inevitably ensued.

Discuss this quote from Warren W. Weirsbe:

"Whenever the gospel is preached in power, it will be opposed by people who make money from superstition and sin."

OPPOSITION and RIOTING MOB

Demetrius, a man who made a good living making silver figurines of Artemis, was afraid his livelihood was being threatened by the increasing number of people who were turning away from Artemis to follow Jesus. He called all his fellow tradesmen / craftsmen together to discuss how to respond to this crisis.

There were two outcomes from this "union" meeting:

- they thought they would lose their income
- they thought Artemis would not be worshipped as she ought to be (costing them further income loss!)

The crowd soon became an angry mob and, grabbing two of Paul's associates (Gaius and Aristarchus) they rushed into the Great Theatre (capacity 25,000) and chanted "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Luke says that the "whole city was in an uproar" (29). Luke also records (verse 32) that most of the people did not even know why they were there. They were confused.

Can you see any similarities between the opposition (and confusion) of the Ephesians and modern-day anti-Christian sentiment/action?

Ultimately, the city clerk (mayor) was able to calm and dispel the mob, claiming that their grievances were not valid and did not warrant such a gathering. This was a similar intervention (of secular authorities stepping in to safeguard due process and, fortunately, Paul) as in Acts 18:12-17 with Gallio in Corinth. As a result, Paul and the other believers were able to continue on.

What was driving Demetrius? How did that compare with what was driving Paul?

How do you see "The Way" creating a disturbance in today's society?

Artemis was a false god. What are the "false" gods in society today? How do they influence people?

How can you prepare yourself for both positive and negative responses as you communicate the gospel?

Paul confronted the idolatry he faced in Ephesus head on. What issue, either personal or cultural, might God be calling you to specifically confront head on?

The Cult & Temple of Artemis

Historians and scholars suggest that there were three "versions" of this goddess: the Roman (Diana), the Greek and the Ephesian.

The Ephesian Artemis was a very different version of the deity than the usual goddess of hunting and wildlife. In Ephesus she was worshipped as a goddess of fertility. Depictions seem to mirror this, with the deity either wearing a string of eggs or breasts around her shoulders and chest.

So caught up in the worship of Artemis, the Ephesians, over a period of 220 years, built a massive temple for her worship. This Temple of Artemis was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



The temple was made up of 127 marble columns, each weighing 150 tons! It was the biggest building in existence at the time. It also served as a bank for merchants and kings, their gold being guaranteed safe by Artemis!

No city was as proud of its glorious structures as Ephesus was of this temple. Without the temple, the city would have lost its claim to cultural and religious pre-eminence.

In 356BC the temple was burned down (the wooden roof-beams were set alight) and then rebuilt. The temple was eventually closed and, subsequently, destroyed in the early to mid 5th century AD. Around this time the name of Artemis was also erased from inscriptions around the city of Ephesus. Interestingly, the closing and destruction of this temple would have occurred just prior to the Christian Council of Ephesus in 431AD!

Today, all that remains of this once proud cult/religion/temple, is a single, poorly-reconstructed, column.

Yet, the power of the gospel that Paul proclaimed fruitfully in Ephesus and the church of Jesus Christ that he gave his life to champion, has continued to spread and grow, even in spite of on-going opposition!



"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"....?????
No...even greater is the Lord Jesus Christ!