

26. Paul Arrives at Ephesus on His 3rd Journey: Acts 19

Acts 18:23 tells how Paul finished his second missionary journey back in Antioch:

23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

After some time, he went back through the regions of his first and second journeys. In this third journey, Paul proceeded into Asia and visited cities in Phrygia, Lydia, and Mysia—places forbidden when he received the Macedonian call during the second journey. His purpose and effort in all these places was to strengthen the disciples.

Paul Arrives at Ephesus to Find Those Who Only Knew the Baptism of John

Acts 19:1-3

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

After Apollos had left Ephesus for Corinth, Paul arrived in Ephesus where he found believers, who like Apollos before his conversion, knew only the baptism of John. Paul's first question addressed whether or not they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. This measure of the Holy Spirit would be that measure promised to all believers upon their obedience to the gospel (See notes on Acts 2:38). In Eph 1:13-14, Paul stated exactly what he meant:

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Of course, having received John's baptism, they would not have received the forgiveness of sins or the Holy Spirit. They are a comparable example to Apollos who had to correctly obey the word of Christ and be baptized by the baptism of Christ in Acts 18:24-26. Apollos and these Ephesians illustrate that there is only one baptism according to the gospel of Christ as Eph 4:4-6 teaches:



4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. [Emphasis added.]

The Difference between the Baptism of John and the Baptism of Christ

Acts 19:4-7

4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, looking forward to the coming Christ upon whom they were to believe. They, like Apollos, understood that they must be baptized into the name of Jesus, and they immediately did so. Not only does the *one baptism* of Eph 4 stand, but also the *one Lord* and *one faith* of Eph 4 stands. Peter had taught in Acts 4:12: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." These Ephesians, as Apollos before them, understood that they were lost since they had not been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. All people must be baptized into the name of the Lord to be saved – today as well as in the day of Apollos and the Ephesians.

The measure of the Holy Spirit, which came upon them at the laying on of the apostle Paul's hands, endowed them to perform the various miracles given to protect the early church. [See the discussion of this measure in the notes on Acts 8.]

Paul Argues Persuasively about the Kingdom of God

Acts 19:8

8 Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

Luke records one of the most intriguing descriptions of Paul's preaching in this passage: Paul argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God taught by Paul is not the kingdom as described by modern millennial theories and popularized by the various renditions of modern fiction on the second coming. False ideas and false doctrines concerning the kingdom of God are too numerous to deal with here. However, the scriptures teach explicitly and specially about the true kingdom of God, much of which comes from Paul's own pen.

The Lord had taught that the called out body (the church) of believers would constitute a kingdom against which the gates of Hades could not prevail in Matt 16:17-19:

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

He also taught that this kingdom was coming in the time of those then living and not in some future millennium in Matt 16:28: "28 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." He added in Mark 9:1 that it would come with power: "9 And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'" He also taught that he would take the Lord's Supper with us in his Father's kingdom in Matt 26:26-29:

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

That power and that supper came on the day of Pentecost after the Lord's death as, indeed, the Lord himself had forecast in Acts 1:8: "8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Also, on that day of Pentecost, came the *one baptism* spoken of by Paul and foretold by the Lord as necessary to ones entering the kingdom of God in John 3:5-6, "5 Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.'"

What Paul preached about the kingdom of God must have agreed with Philip's preaching in Acts 8:12: "12 But when they believed Philip as he preached **the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ**, they were baptized, both men and women." [Emphasis added.] Repeatedly, Paul preached this kingdom of God. In Acts 20:25, he said: "25 Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again." In fact, Luke concludes his account of Acts with the same statement on Paul's preaching in Acts 28:31: "31 Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."

The kingdom, which was to come, came in Acts 2; and the citizens of that kingdom are the called out body of believers. Paul identified those citizens in Eph 2:19-22:

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Christians today must accept the teaching of 1 Cor 4:6: "Do not go beyond what is written." They must not accept the latter day revelations and fictional stories that call for a kingdom yet to come. To do so is to go completely beyond what the apostles and prophets wrote in the New Testament. There is no similarity or compatibility between the New Testament teachings on the kingdom of God and the concepts of modern millennial theories and fiction.

After Acts 2, when the kingdom of God came with power, the apostles and prophets always speak of the kingdom in the present tense. It is never spoken of in future tense as something yet to come. In 1 Cor 15:23-25, Paul clearly shows the kingdom is under Christ's reign as king: "24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power." In Col 1:12-13, Paul's shows that we now share in the inheritance in the kingdom and that God has brought us into the kingdom:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified [**past tense**] you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued [**past tense**] us from the dominion of darkness and brought [**past tense**] us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. [Emphasis and comments added.]

The Hebrew writer points out emphatically that the called out are entering the kingdom now and not at some future time foretold only by false teachers and the writers of pop fiction.

In Heb 12:28-29, he writes:

28 Therefore, since we are receiving [**present tense**] a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be [**present tense**] thankful, and so worship [**present tense**] God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire." [Emphasis and comments added.]

John begins the *Revelation of Jesus Christ* by asserting the present existence of the kingdom and the place of Christians, to whom he is writing, in that kingdom. He wrote in Rev 1:6: "6 and has made [**past tense**] us to be a kingdom and priests to serve [**present tense**] his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. [Emphasis and comments added.]" In addition, John made it clear in Rev 1:9 that he was, with us, in the kingdom:

9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

In Rev 5, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders responded to the prayers of the saints with a new song. In that song in Rev 5:10, they sang:

10 You have made them [**the saints**] to be [**present tense**] a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." [Emphasis and comments added.]

This kingdom of God is now on earth and in heaven forever; and it includes all the saints whom God adds to the church. This teaching continues through the *Revelation*. In Rev 12:10 also speaks of the kingdom in existence during the lives of the saints:

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

"Now have come the **salvation** and the **power** and the **kingdom** of our God,

and the **authority** of his Christ. [Emphasis and comments added.]

The salvation, power, kingdom, and authority exist during the lives of the saints and not at that future, fictitious time of the false teachers. When did salvation exist? It existed on the day of Pentecost where in Acts 2:47 Luke recorded: "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." When did Christ receive authority? He said that he had all authority in Matt 28:18: "18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." When did the power come? Jesus said that it would come with the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem in Acts 1:8: "8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Luke recorded the exact time that power came in Acts 2:4: "4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." When did the kingdom of God come? Peter records the exact time that the risen Savior sat upon his throne in Acts 2:32-36

32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

"The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet." ' 1

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Faithful Christians must hold fast to the teaching and not go beyond what is written about the kingdom of God.

Acts 19:9-10

9 But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. 10 This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Even with the power of the Holy Spirit and his persuasive arguments, Paul was unable to convince many of those who heard him at the synagogue. Their attitudes and responses were similar to what we face today: some were obstinate, refused to believe, and publicly spoke evilly against the way. Paul moved with his disciples to the hall of Tyrannus. During the course of his two years, all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

The Effect of God's Extraordinary Miracles

Acts 19:11-12

11 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

As Paul argued persuasively concerning the kingdom of God, God did extraordinary miracles through him. As in the previous lessons, these miracles were to confirm the word, as in Mark 16:20: "20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it." Heb 2:3-4 places that confirmation in the past tense:

This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

With the advent of the written word, these signs and miracles passed away, according to 1 Cor 13:8: "But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away." These Ephesians, as those described at the beginning of the chapter, had to believe the word, repent of their sins, and be baptized in the name of Christ.

The Manifestation of Evil in Ephesus and the New Testament World

Acts 19:13-16

13 Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." 14 Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 [One day] the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 16 Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

In New Testament times, evil spirits and demons possessed people. However, as one reads the New Testament, it is apparent that they were being diminished in power and influence by

the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In Luke 4:33-37, the words *demons* and *evil spirits* are used synonymously, and Jesus has absolute power over them:

33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!"

35 "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" 37 And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

The demons knew Jesus as Lord just as they knew Paul as the Lord's apostle here. In fact, the demons fear and tremble before the Lord, according to James 2:19: "19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder." From the very beginning, the Lord had foretold that some would claim his power to cast out demon as they are doing here in Ephesus. In Matt 7:22-23, the Lord had said:

22 Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and **in your name drive out demons** and perform many miracles?" 23 Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" [Emphasis added.]

Then Jesus described and defined the war that he fights against Satan and his evil spirits in Matt 12:26-29 when he is accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of evil:

26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

Jesus drove out demons by the Spirit of God, and parallel happening with that ability is the kingdom of God coming upon them. The rise of the kingdom of God spelled the downfall of the kingdom of Satan. The Lord entered the strong man's house and bound him, and controlled his house. However, there remained in the New Testament world the influence of evil spirits – sometimes in people, like here in Ephesus, but always in idolatry and false religions. Paul explained the dichotomy in 1 Cor 10:20-22, making clear who holds the power and strength:

20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

These demons are capable of performing miraculous signs to deceive the world, according to Rev 16:14: "They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty." These evil spirits dwell in people today – who refuse to love the truth and be saved – through lust and sin and lying wonders. 2 Thess 2:9-10 is emphatic and clear:

9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that

deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

God relegated evil spirits to what Christ call the arids places, according to Luke 11:24-26

24 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

Of course, a man so freed from evil, who succumbs to multiplied forces of evil, achieves a state worse that the first. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:20-22:

20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

In Rev 18:1-2, evil spirits occupy the fallen Babylon:

8 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. 2 With a mighty voice he shouted:

"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

She has become a home for demons
and a haunt for every evil spirit,

a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.

God through Christ bound the devil, the evil spirits, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness with his inspired word of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes in Eph 6:10-17:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the **devil's schemes**. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, **against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of **righteousness** in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the **gospel of peace**. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of **faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. [Emphasis added.]

The Result of These Powerful Miracles

Acts 19:17-20

17 When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. 18 Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. 19 A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together

and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. 20 In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

Confronted with these powerful miracles, Jews and Greeks of Ephesus were afraid and honored the name of the Lord Jesus. Like those on the day of Pentecost, one might say, they were cut to their hearts. Common to all those who obey the gospel message, they believed as required by Heb 11:6: "6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." They also confessed their evil deeds as in Rom 10:10: "10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." They showed their repentance by burning their scrolls fulfilling God's command in Acts 17:30-31: "30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed." As those in the first of the chapter, they certainly were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

A Great Disturbance about the Way

Acts 19:21-22

21 After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." 22 He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

This passage begins the final leg of Paul's third journey as he turns to Jerusalem once more. 1 Cor 16:5-9 shows the projected itinerary with Paul passing through Macedonia, perhaps to raise support for the saints in Jerusalem

5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you – for I will be going through Macedonia. . . . 8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

Romans 15:25-26, which most think he penned from Ephesus at about this time (58 AD), makes clear that Paul planned to raise support for the poor and also to carry it to them in Jerusalem.

25 Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

Acts 19:23-27

23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. 25 He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. 26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. 27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

Demetrius created a great disturbance about the Way because he was afraid of losing income from his craft of making idols. From his idolatrous point of view, Demetrius thought he and his fellow tradesmen would lose money; and Artemis, goddess of the earth, would be discredited and robbed of her divine majesty. Artemis, as with all idols, had her origin in the East, as far as Mesopotamia, Babylon, and Assyria, emanating and spreading from the influence and popularity of Baal. She was known, as Demetrius said, throughout Asia and the

world. That she could be robbed of her divine majesty proves that she had no divinity to begin with, being a piece of metal or stone.

Acts 19:28-31

28 When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. 30 Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. 31 Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

During the chaotic meeting, Paul wanted to appear, but the disciples restrained him. Even some of the public officials – Paul’s friends – tried to constrain him.

Acts 19:32-41

32 The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. 33 The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. 34 But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

35 The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? 36 Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. 37 You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. 38 If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. 39 If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. 40 As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." 41 After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

The city clerk gets control of the crowd, and dismisses the assembly. The clerk challenged the crowd by saying that the disciples had not robbed temples or blasphemed their goddess. These facts speak to the care with which Paul and the disciples lived in a world alien to the gospel of Christ, living peacefully and avoiding controversy where possible. 1 Cor 9:21 explains how he lived before Gentiles: “21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.” How do Christians of all times survive the trial of living in their contemporary societies? A quiet and godly life pays huge dividends according to Rom 13:3-5:

Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

At the beginning of Acts 20, Paul leaves Ephesus and sets out to Macedonia.