

Chapter Nineteen

Chapter 19

- In verses 1-7 we discover a curious story involving Paul meeting with some “disciples” whose theology was incomplete.
- In verse 2, the text is usually translated as, “He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They said to him, “No, we haven’t heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”
 - This and similar translations often miss the point. It sounds like they were unaware of the existence of the Holy Spirit. How is that possible as the Holy Spirit is mentioned throughout the Tanach?
 - It is best understood as a statement referring to the prophesied manifestation of the Holy Spirit as was promised to the disciples in Jerusalem. As this group of disciples of John, the Baptist, were removed from

the Jerusalem assembly, it stands to reason that their understanding and experience were also removed.

- It is also important to recall that John, the Baptist, did not have a full understanding of the identity of the Messiah until years into his ministry when Yeshua came to be baptized by him. These disciples of John, although professing faith, needed to have a complete understanding and full experience.
- How important do you think it was to these believers to have this added knowledge and experience of the Holy Spirit?
- How did this validate their faith experience in the eyes of Paul?
- In verse 8, we see Paul engaging in dialogue in the synagogue and speaking boldly for three months.
 - Some translations describe Paul's style as "arguing" but this has an unnecessarily negative connotation to modern ears. Rabbinic discourse is often in the style of classical "argumentation" but not usually with a heated, emotional meaning. It is more of a type of philosophical discourse and professorial, usually

involving the frequent use of questions and dialogue.

- If Paul had been engaging in fleshly arguing, would his listeners have tolerated him for three months?
- According to verses 9-10, were all his listeners tolerant and teachable?
 - What was the cause of their issue?
 - What did they do?
 - What wisdom did Paul show in how he responded to this resistance?
 - How long did Paul continue there and what was the end result?
 - Did Paul minister to both Jews and gentiles?
- In verses 11-12, the text explicitly states that, “God worked special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out.”
 - Does the text imply that Paul “laid hands on these special cloths and anointed them to be used for mira-

cles”? This has been a favorite practice among today’s “faith-healers” and charlatans who often offer similar items for a “seed-faith contribution of money”.

- The text says that these items “were carried away from his body”, likely implying that others did this.
- Regardless, it clearly states that there were many bone fide miracles, and that God was behind them.
- In a city like Ephesus, wholly given over to idolatry and the pursuit of magical arts, how important do you think this exhibition of power was to validate Paul’s message?
- In verses 13-16, we see a band of Jewish exorcists plying their trade and, like Simon with the “laying on of hands” in Acts chapter 8, thought they could simply add “the name of Yeshua” to their bag of magical tricks.
 - Given that the name “Yeshua” was not an uncommon Jewish name, these exorcists had to be specific by saying, “We adjure you by Yeshua whom Paul preaches”.
 - How did the evil spirit respond to the attempts by the exorcists?

- Perhaps this experience of rebuke was implying that these exorcists did not possess authority to claim anything in the name of Yeshua.
- According to verse 17, what was the end result of their embarrassing experience?
 - Does this speak to the sovereignty of God overriding the errors of man?
- In verses 18-20, how was the ministry of Paul enlarged?
 - What did these people do?
 - Why do you suppose there was a need for a public “book burning” of occultic sources?
 - Does this serve as an example for people coming to faith today to make a “clean break” from occultic associations?
 - Why would that be important?
- In verse 23, it states, “About that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way”.
 - Do you think that the numbers of people coming to faith and publicly burning their expensive occultic

items might have garnered the attention of the local pagan idol makers? Why would they have been threatened by that?

- When teaching the truth of the Bible and demonstrating how it challenges and refutes pagan practices, is it reasonable to expect resistance and hostility even today?
- If this was true in Paul's day, then how much more strongly do people react today when their man-made traditions based in paganism are shown to be in error?
- How strongly do believers today react when confronted by clear examples of their syncretistic blending of elements of the Bible with pagan traditions?
- In verses 24-27, we learn of such resistance to Paul.
 - Who was Demetrius and what was his trade?
 - How was his trade threatened by Paul's effectiveness in proclaiming the gospel?
 - What did he do to stop the advance of the gospel?

- His appeal to his fellow craftsmen was two-fold. Which do you think was actually more important to him of the two, business or religion?
- In verses 28-34, we see an angry crowd, riled up for action, with a unifying slogan, ignoring the normal path of civil litigation in dispute resolution and starting a riot.
 - Have we seen such behavior in our current society?
 - What does verse 29 indicate regarding the general comprehension of the people regarding what the issue was?
 - Paul wanted to enter the fray, but his friends didn't allow him. Do you think their counsel was wise?
 - What does verse 32 indicate about the understanding of this "mob mentality"?
 - Do we see evidence of the same dynamic occurring in our culture today?
- In verse 33, the Jewish community, not connected with the believers in "the Way", decided to make an attempt to quell the disturbance.

- Do you think this element of the Jewish community in Ephesus believed that the rioters would not distinguish between the believers and themselves?
- In verse 34, it appears that the mob would not listen to anyone who “was a Jew”.
 - Is such wholesale antisemitism still prevalent in our society today?
 - How long did the crowd continue their “temper-tantrum”?
- In verses 35-41, we see the town clerk, probably a Roman appointed mayor or administrative official bringing order to the rioters.
 - What was the essence of his counsel?
 - What were his comments regarding the men who had been unlawfully brought there?
 - His appeal was to turn the energy and focus of the crowd, and especially Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen, to pursue their issues through legal means. He then dismissed the assembly.

- What would have happened if this person tasked with being in charge of the city had been derelict in his duties and failed to promptly correct and dismiss this mob and restore law and order?
- Are there examples in our current society where rioters are allowed to continue committing lawless acts, sometimes involving arson, property damage, assault, battery, rape, murder and other crimes where the assigned officials have been derelict in their duties and have allowed such behavior to continue with reckless disregard for the safety of the citizens?
- What does this suggest about our current society?