

**1185 Events at Ephesus at start of Paul's third missionary journey – Acts(18)22–(19)41
(by Whirlwind)**

First, we discussed Paul's second visit to Ephesus during his third missionary journey and the man named Apollos, emphasizing the freedom involved in "letting the Holy Spirit lead our Bible study." Second, we discussed Paul's return to Ephesus and the miracle of the Holy Spirit descending through the laying on of hands. Third, we learned that Paul spent two years in Tyrannus's school and that his handkerchiefs or aprons could heal the sick. Fourth, we addressed the case of those who cast out demons in the name of the Lord Jesus without His authority, only to be overcome by the evil spirits themselves—an event that ultimately brought glory to the name of the Lord Jesus. Fifth, we see the victory in Ephesus and how believers took action to burn a large number of heretical books. Sixth, it discusses the background of the disturbance caused by silversmiths like Demetrius over the financial reason. Finally, it mentions how the town clerk of Ephesus calmed and dispersed the crowd.

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (4/12/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.

1. Paul's second visit to Ephesus and the man named Apollos

"When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch. And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent (G2204) in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted (G1246, convinced) the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."(Acts 18:22–28)

I apologize for not noticing this last time: Paul's second missionary journey had already concluded by the time he returned to Antioch, and we have now entered his third missionary journey. So, at the beginning, we will review some of the points covered last time and add quite a few additional insights. Last time we discussed the passage introducing Apollos quite clearly. Please take a look at the text, which mentions his many strengths; his weakness was that he knew only the baptism of John. Although he did not yet have a correct understanding of salvation at that time, "and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."(Acts 18:26) Please note that Priscilla's name is listed first; this indicates that she had a clearer understanding of spiritual matters, so this is a meaningful example of

the order of precedence. Later, when Apollos arrived in Achaia, "for he powerfully refuted (G1246, convinced) the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."(Acts 18:28)

Here we want to emphasize what we discussed earlier: in "letting the Holy Spirit lead our Bible study," we may make mistakes or wrong decisions within the freedom He grants us. When we err, God corrects us through various means. This time, He used the internet to help me see what I had missed previously. Therefore, we should still consult reference materials at times, especially when dealing with facts—but we must not assume they are always correct; we must exercise discernment. There will inevitably be things we fail to see—as Paul said, "If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know."(1 Corinthians 8:2). God will open our eyes to what we ought to know; we must not presume to think we already know everything.

Please note that the word "fervent" (G2204) appears only twice; the other instance is in this passage: "not lagging behind in diligence, fervent (G2204) in spirit, serving the Lord."(Romans 12:11) So the meaning is very clear. The problem is that before Priscilla told Apollos, he was preaching the wrong gospel; therefore, merely being fervent in spirit is not enough—one must have a correct understanding of the truth. We often see this in new believers: because they are fervent in spirit, they want to preach the gospel relying on their own strength. They really should wait until their lives have been sufficiently transformed; otherwise, that passion is likely to burn out very quickly, leaving them feeling extremely exhausted. This is very harmful. Sometimes we really do need to wait, and this is a good example.

Note another word: "refuted (G1246, convinced)." It appears only once here, and it should not be translated as "refuted" in the Chinese Union Version, because Apollos was preaching. He knew full well that "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."(Romans 10:17) He was not debating with the Jews over who was right or wrong; he simply sought to convince them with the truth. This aligns with the Great Commission (cf. Matthew 28:18-20): we are to preach, but we need not argue, because people have free will, and not everyone has ears to hear.

Regarding the Chinese Union Version's translation, the use of the word "refute" seems to imply a debate. We have already explained that this is not the case, so I will take this opportunity to share a testimony about the futility of debates. When I was in high school, a classmate once said to me, "Let's have a debate. You can choose the topic and which side to take, but you're bound to lose." Naturally, I wasn't willing to accept that, so I chose the topic and side as he suggested—and I really did lose. So I thought, since I could choose my side, I'd pick the same topic but take the opposite position; that way, I could win the debate. He thought about it for a moment and said I'd lose even faster, so he refused. Naturally, I was even more defiant and pleaded with him repeatedly until he finally agreed. In the end, just as he'd said, I lost even faster.

So I should have known back then that arguing was pointless, but I didn't learn that lesson until about more than forty years later, when my younger brother explained why I was

bound to lose. He said that person's logic was better than mine; as long as that person could steer me toward a certain point, from that point on, logically speaking or saying from logical induction, I was bound to lose. Perhaps that explanation is too simplistic, so let's look at the best explanation I can offer, using the children's game of tic-tac-toe as an example. In tic-tac-toe, there are only nine squares arranged in a grid. If the first player marks a circle in any square, the opponent can mark an X in any of the remaining squares. This continues until the first player gets three circles in a row, in which case they win, or the opponent gets three crosses in a row, in which case they win. Of course, there are also situations where neither player wins. Since there are only nine squares, we can list all possible scenarios and see that if the first player makes the right choice every step of the way, they are guaranteed to win. For the second player to win, the first player must make a mistake by choosing a wrong spot; only then, if the second player makes the right choices from that point on, is victory possible.

Of course, the logic is far more complex. The "induction" we mentioned earlier refers to the opponent's logical errors. We've discussed all this simply to help everyone understand the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, ..." (Matthew 28:19) does not mean we are to go out and win debates—especially since people have free will and may agree with their lips but not in their hearts. The majority of Jews at that time were a prime example of this, and the same holds true today. Instead, we are to preach in the manner of Apollos, for the Great Commission states, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; ..." (Matthew 28:20)

2. Paul's return to Ephesus and the laying on of hands to bestow the Holy Spirit

"It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. There were in all about twelve men." (Acts 19:1-7)

When Paul first came to Ephesus, "...they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus." (Acts 18:20-21) We now see that God indeed granted him permission to return to Ephesus and performed a miracle through him: by the laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit came upon twelve men, and they began to speak in tongues and prophesy. In fact, he not only returned to Ephesus but remained there for two years.

We see that these twelve men, in accordance with what the Book of Revelation which says to all seven churches—that those who have ears to hear should listen (cf. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)—were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Previously, in "1181 Paul's first journey continued and Jerusalem council – Acts(14)1–(15)12," specifically in the section titled

"3. Paul's near-fatal stoning and the appointment of elders," we referenced Acts 19:6. Please refer to that passage to understand why Paul laid his hands on them to bring down the Holy Spirit.

3. Paul's two years at Tyrannus' School and the healing power of his handkerchief or apron

"And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning (G1256, disputing) and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out."(Acts 19:8–12)

Paul, following his usual custom, went into the synagogue (cf. Acts 17:1-2), but some spoke against the word. So Paul, along with his disciples, withdrew from them and spent two years preaching in the school of Tyrannus. It was not Paul himself, but God who performed extraordinary miracles through Paul's hands, to the extent that even his handkerchiefs or aprons could heal the sick.

Please note that the word G1256 appears thirteen times in the Bible. This does not refer to debate, but rather to the Apollos-style preaching mentioned earlier. This becomes clear when we consider that "what God tells us through the Bible is consistent."

4. Exorcists invoking the name of the Lord Jesus were overpowered by the evil spirit

"But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified."(Acts 19:13–17)

We see that it is useless for people to take the Lord Jesus' name in vain; it can even backfire. Isn't this similar to what is written here? "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."(Deuteronomy 18:22) Those who heed the words of false prophets will make wrong decisions. Here we also see that the people of Ephesus, because of this, held the name of the Lord Jesus in high esteem; some believed, while others were afraid.

5. The victory in Ephesus and the burning of a large number of heretical books

"Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while."(Acts 19:18–22)

Those who believed repented thoroughly and put their faith into practice, including burning large quantities of heretical books, so that the word of the Lord spread rapidly and prevailed. Here we see Paul's plan to go to Rome, though it was clearly not his intention at that time to go in chains, as the Scripture says, "When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius."(Acts 27:1) He also sent Timothy and Erastus on their way to Macedonia, while he himself remained in Ephesus for a while.

6. The background of the disturbance caused by Demetrius and the silversmiths

"About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence."

When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together. Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"(Acts 19:23–34)

We see that silversmiths like Demetrius attacked Paul over financial issues. Although he spoke the truth—"...gods made with hands are no gods at all."(Acts 19:26)—the Bible makes

it very clear to Christians: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth (G3126, Mammon, money)."(Matthew 6:24)

Since the people at that time believed in Artemis (G735, Diana), Demetrius and the other silversmiths used her to stir up the crowd; we see that people are quite easily incited. They wanted to seize Paul, but only managed to bring Jason and Aristarchus to the theater. Although Paul did not regard his own life as of any account and wanted to go to the theater, in the end, because of the disciples and those who urged him, he made the right choice—not to make an unnecessary sacrifice. For " Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones."(Psalm 116:15) Although Alexander the Jew tried to explain, the crowd would not give him a chance; for about two hours they kept shouting, When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "...Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"(Acts 19:28) Note that although the Bible does not explicitly state it, Alexander was likely a disciple, as the term "defense" is used here.

7. The city clerk calms and dismisses the crowd

"After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven? So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another. But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." After saying this he dismissed the assembly." (Acts 19:35–41)

The town clerk used the facts he knew to defuse their accusations—namely, the guardianship of the temple of Great Artemis and the image within it that they believed had fallen from Zeus. This image had clearly fallen from the sky; no wonder some said it resembled a boulder shaped somewhat like Diana (Artemis). But the town clerk knew they were making a fuss over nothing and could not explain themselves when questioned, so he dismissed the crowd.