

Having a Riot here in Ephesus

Acts 19:23-41 November 15, 2020

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

Acts 19²³ About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way.²⁴ A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there.²⁵ He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: "You know, my friends, that 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 gods made by human hands 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."

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 all of them rushed into the theater together.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.

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 in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they 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: "Fellow Ephesians, 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 calm down 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 what happened today. 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. ¹

¹ The New International Version. (2011): Zondervan.

1. Deity or Deals

Acts 19:23-27

*He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all.
There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name...
the goddess herself... will be robbed of her divine majesty.* Verses 26, 27

A. The Way

Acts 19:23

Way ὁδός (*hodos*) A Greek noun used 98 times in the NT 20 of those in Acts. It has a range of meaning from a road or path. It can refer to a journey or distance. It can also refer to a certain 'way' such as a method, style, conduct or culture. More specifically it is the Christian's 'way of life'. John 14:6 Jesus says he is the 'way' the truth and the life. This seems to be the word chosen by Jesus' disciples to describe their journey as they follow Jesus. It is a process and progression word rather than a stationary one. Not just the destination but the sojourn, the path, the direction is of vital importance. This speaks of ongoing spiritual growth, transformation, and maturity as normal.

B. Silver, Shrines and Sales

Acts 19:24, 25

This was more about money less about worship

He consults with businessmen not religious leaders

C. Effectiveness of the Message

Acts 19:26, 27

Paul is well known

No need for marketing, protests, boycotts, or social media
Message is known – 'gods are no gods at all'

'We must protect the goddess'

What they really mean is we need to protect ourselves

2. Chaos or Calm

Acts 19:28-34

*The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another.
Most of the people did not even know why they were there.* Verse 32

A. Trying to honour the goddess

Acts 19:28, 29

Motivated by fury

Big uproar

Some of Paul's companions nabbed, missed Paul

B. No need for Paul

Acts 19:30, 31

Disciples prevent Paul

Officials dissuade Paul

Some were clearly 'friends'

Paul says nothing and does nothing

God does not need a defence
His divinity cannot be robbed
His divinity is not granted

Judges 6:25-32 (Gideon and the Altars)

C. The assembly

Acts 19:32-34

Word choice

Assembly ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) A Greek noun meaning assembly, church or congregation used 114 times in the NT and 23 times in Acts. Typically, it refers to the gathering of Christians. However, it is used three times in this chapter (19:32, 39, 40) to refer to the assembled mob.

Shouting and confusion
Alexander – a hostile witness?

3. Riot or Reason

Acts 19:35-41

we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.

Verse 40

A. 'We' believe

Acts 19:35, 36

Artemis' image came from heaven
We are Guardians of Artemis

B. 'We' know

Acts 19:37

No robbery happened
No blasphemy has occurred

C. If, then,

Acts 19:38, 39

The Craftsmen can go to court – If they have a case
Convene a legal assembly – If you have a legitimate concern

D. We are

Acts 19:40, 41

At risk of Roman intervention – Rome is more worrisome

Danger κινδυνεύω (*kindyneuō*) A Greek verb meaning to be in danger, jeopardy, or risk. It is used only 4 times in the NT and twice in this chapter, in verse 40 and 27. Luke identifies the 'real' danger as from unruly behaviour not Paul. The two different causes are linked using this uncommon word.

Without cause for this uproar – Artemis is not reason enough
Dismissed – go home, nothing to see here

Having a Riot

As the message of the Gospel moves it will be accompanied by followers of the 'Way' making radical changes to their world simply by having their lives being changed.

Craftsmen of the day were protecting their economic world
Politicians of the day were protecting their political power
People of the day were confused but protecting religion (status quo)

The Roman Peace was never personal peace
but enforced order by intimidation and violence

How is it that the followers of Jesus made such a dynamic impact?

How is it that our changed lives today are not making an economic, political, or religious impact?

Transformed lives as followers of Jesus

We will change our society not as much by our protests or cancelations or boycotts or even legislation.

Society will be only truly be changed when we are changed, transformed by the Spirit of God.

