

'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #27

Acts 19:11-41_(NASB)

Acts 19:11-12 (NASB)

God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² 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.

Q: Luke begins his account of Paul's work in Ephesus by recounting miracles being performed in new ways—by handkerchiefs or towels that had touched Paul carrying healing power to the sick and demonized. What is it that Luke is drawing our attention to?

- Power!
 - As we already noted, Ephesus was a center of power—magic power, religious power, and political power.
 - **Paul's ministry in Ephesus demonstrated that the Name of Jesus was stronger than any of them!**

Acts 19:13-17 (NASB)

*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."¹⁴ Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷**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.***

Q: If there is power in the Name of Jesus, why did the 7 sons of Sceva fail?

- There is definitely power in the Name of Jesus, but it isn't magic!
 - Magic attempts to gain power without paying the price of humble submission to the God that power belongs to.
- Have you seen people treat the power of Jesus like magic? Can you give an example?

Extra info on the Seven Sons of Sceva:

In the ancient world the Jews were notorious for their magical practices, and there were people who went around making a living by various kinds of pseudo-scientific or clairvoyant powers, including the practice of exorcism.

- They were ready to call on the names of any and every god or divinity in their invocations; and often they recited long lists of names so as to be sure of including the right god in any particular case.
 - Pagans also used the various Jewish names of God for the same reasons.
 - A magical formula preserved in the Paris magical papyrus reads, "I adjure thee by the God of the Hebrews, Jesus."
 - These Jewish exorcists (like the ones in [Luke 11:19](#)) began to use the name of Jesus in an attempt to rival Paul's powers.
 - The seven sons of Sceva are as much a mystery as the disciples of John at Ephesus.
 - There is no record of a Jewish Chief Priest named Sceva, so it is likely they made up this claim to make themselves more marketable.
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Acts 19:18-20 (NASB)

*Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. ¹⁹ **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.** ²⁰ **So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.***

Q: How much would those magic books be worth in today's currency, and what should the value of these books tell us?

- Some estimated the 50,000 pieces of silver would be worth 6.4 million dollars today.
- This was radical repentance, and a greater display of power than healing the sick or demonized!
- When the gospel begins to have a financial impact, trouble is just around the corner!

Q: What is so significant about these people burning their magic books?

- They were surrendering control to the power of God!

Acts 19:21-41 (NASB)

*²¹Now 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.**" ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.*

*²³ About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴**For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen;** ²⁵ these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that **our prosperity depends upon this business.**" ²⁶ "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.**" ²⁷ "**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.**"*

*²⁸ When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "**Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!**" ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. ³¹ Also some of the Asiarchs (one of a group of civil and priestly officials in the Roman province of Asia who presided over the public games and religious rites) who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. ³² 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. ³³ 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. ³⁴ 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!" ³⁵ 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?**" ³⁶ "So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. ³⁷ "For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸ "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. ³⁹ "But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. ⁴⁰ "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." ⁴¹ After saying this he dismissed the assembly.*

Q: Why was Demetrius so upset with Paul and the Christians in Ephesus?

- He was a silver smith who made and sold silver shrines of Artemis.
- Demetrius was losing business, and so were the other workmen of similar trades.
- But even more threatening was the effect the gospel was having on the Temple of Artemis.
 - Paul's gospel was cracking the foundation Ephesus was built on!

Q: Why does the town clerk say everyone knows that Artemis' image fell down from heaven?

- The first temple of Artemis was built around 800BCE. It probably contained a meteorite that the local people regarded as an image of Artemis that was given to them from heaven. That's what the town clerk is most likely referring to.

Extra info on Paul in Ephesus:

Paul spent more time (3 years) in Ephesus than any other city. Luke tells us a summary of Paul's time in Ephesus, and how it ended with a riot; but for some reason he chose not to tell us the details.

Paul wrote 2 letters to the Corinthians while he was in Ephesus and describes some of what he was experiencing there.

- From [1Co 16:5-8](#) it may be concluded that [1 Corinthians](#) was written from Ephesus before Pentecost (in the late spring) and that [2 Corinthians](#) may have been written later that same year before the onset of winter.
- However, [2Co 2:13](#); [7:5](#) seems to indicate that the second letter could have been written from Macedonia.

1Cor 4:9-13 (NASB)

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. ¹¹ To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹² and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³ when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

- You can feel the sense of burden and frustration in Paul's description.

2Cor. 1:8-10 (NASB)

*For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; ⁹ indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves **SO THAT WE WOULD NOT TRUST IN OURSELVES, BUT IN GOD WHO RAISES THE DEAD;** ¹⁰ **WHO DELIVERED US FROM SO GREAT A PERIL OF DEATH, AND WILL DELIVER US, HE ON WHOM WE HAVE SET OUR HOPE. AND HE WILL YET DELIVER US,** ¹¹ you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.*

- You can see that Paul's experience in Ephesus had deteriorated even further from his first letter when he says they "despaired even of life" in verse 9.
- But you can also see Paul has begun to see the purpose of his troubles when he says, "so that we would not trust in ourselves, but God."

2Cor 12:9-10 (NASB)

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

- Paul's tone in his second letter is very different from his first letter.
- Something happened to him between his first and second letter that changed him.
 - He still believes as much as ever in the power of God.
 - But he has discovered that power is displayed IN and THROUGH his weakness and feelings of inadequacy.

In spite of how Paul felt about his weaknesses, struggles, frustration, and setbacks he experienced in Ephesus, God's power was put on full display.

- **Acts 19:10** *This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. (NASB)*
- **Acts 19:20** *So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. (NASB)*

All disciples who labor for the Lord, if they are to be used powerfully and effectively, will have to learn that God works through weakness and difficulty more than our strengths and successes!

- **Have you learned this yet or are you still measuring yourself by your strengths and victories?**
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Follow Up Assignment

Q: How do you treat the Power of Jesus' name?

- Do you try to wield it to get what you want? Or do you submit to it and let it use you?
- Are there any "magic books" (ways you are still trying to cling to control) you need to burn?

Q: When Paul was in Ephesus, Jesus told him He would demonstrate His power perfectly through Paul's weakness ([2Cor 12:9-10](#)).

- Do you embrace your weakness so Jesus' power can be made perfect in your life?
- Or do you hide your weakness and try to make your power more perfect?

Q: Paul said he had become content with weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake. How content are you with these? Rate each of these from 1 to 10, 10 being totally content.

- Weaknesses ____
- Insults ____
- Distresses ____
- Persecutions ____
- Difficulties ____

What do your answers say about how much of Jesus' power is being demonstrated in your life?

EXTRA INFO ABOUT ARTEMIS, HER TEMPLE, AND THE CULTURE AT EPHEBUS



This is a statue of Artemis of Ephesus.

Interestingly, the crowd in [Acts 19:28, 34](#) didn't chant "Great is Artemis", but "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians."

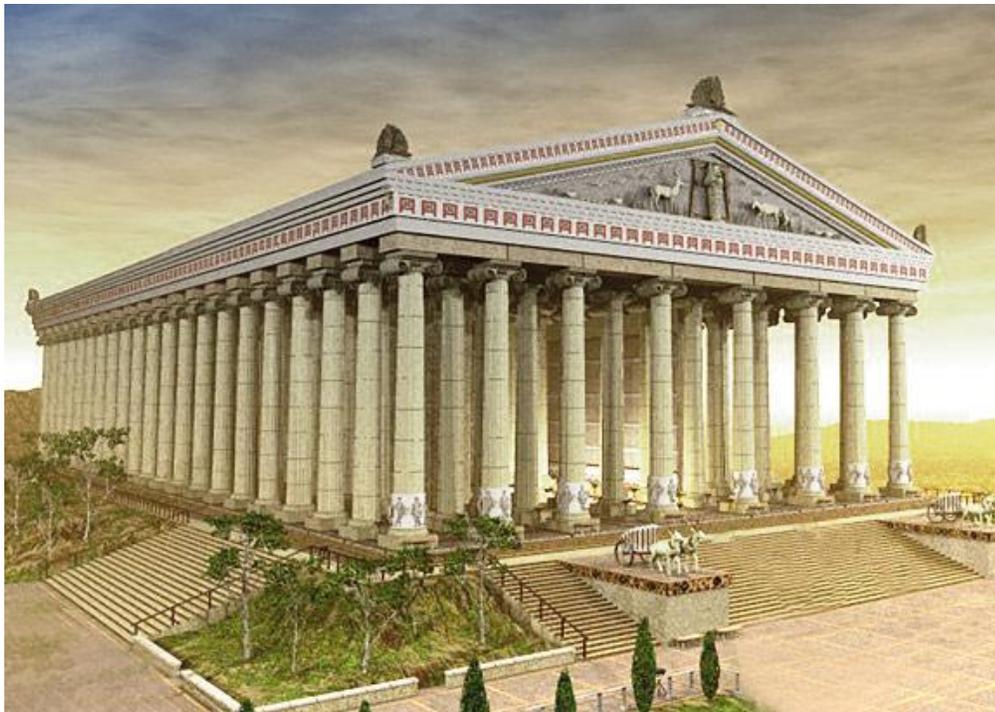
- Most Ephesus scholars, religious and otherwise, differentiate between a generic "Artemis" and this "Artemis of the Ephesians."
- That is not to say that Artemis and Artemis of the Ephesians were completely different goddesses, but the Ephesians' version of Artemis had a different appearance and emphases than the generic Artemis.
 - According to Deborah Stott, associate professor emerita of art history at the University of Texas at Dallas, ancient gods and goddesses sometimes took on distinct personas in different cities.
 - For years, scholars and archeologists thought the image of Artemis of Ephesus was covered in breasts, and therefore she was probably one of many sex goddesses in the ancient world.
 - However, most scholars and archeologists now believe these were not breasts, but either bee larva or scrotums or testicles, (possibly bull testicles).
 - Far from being a sex goddess, Artemis of Ephesus was seen as the ultimate "Tom Boy" and feminist.

Literary sources from Paul's time associate the Ephesians' Artemis with childbearing.

- Although the literary evidence associates Artemis of Ephesus with midwifery, it does not link her with mothering or domestic life or with sex.
- Rather, it suggests she was a virgin in the strictest sense, and undomesticated.
- The literary evidence suggests no link whatsoever between Artemis of the Ephesians and fertility or mothering.
- What it does suggest is a strong link to midwifery, to the Amazon women, to virginity, saving, and protection.
- Additionally, the epigraphic sources hint at the goddess's volatility and power.

Rather than viewing Artemis of Ephesus as a fertility goddess or even as sexually active, people at the time of the earliest Christians appear to have seen in her the ability to deliver a woman through life's most dangerous passage—childbirth.

- As the number one cause of death in women was childbirth, Ephesus' fully female, yet undomesticated, goddess was viewed as presiding at births without being, herself, associated with sex, fertility, or nurturing.



What the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus may have looked like.

The temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

- It “was the largest building in the Greek world, about four times larger than the Athenian Parthenon.” (Baugh 2005:19)
 - Pliny recorded the length of this temple at 425 feet, and the width at 225 feet. Some 127 columns, 60 feet in height, supported the roof.
 - The altar was large enough to sacrifice hundreds of cattle simultaneously. (LiDonnici 1999:85)
- The Temple of Artemis became one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World because of its stunning beauty.
 - Made of solid marble, the temple's 127 Ionic columns were decorated with ornate friezes, brilliantly gilded in silver and gold.

As well as being a place where religious rituals were performed, the temple served as one of the largest banks of the ancient world.

- Dio Chrysostom describes how the money of private citizens was deposited in the building; and even by foreigners and "commonwealths and kings", which was apparently due to the "safety" of the sanctuary.
- It appears at least to have played an important role in the economy of Asia minor, playing a similar role to treasuries at religious sanctuaries in Greece, such as Delphi and Olympia (Strabo 14.1.22, Plutarch *Demeter* 30.1 and Xenophon *Anabasis* 5.3.4f also mention this function of the temple).
- In fact, in the 2nd century AD, Aelius Aristides even refers to Ephesus as "the common chancellery of Asia ... and her recourse in need", presumably in reference to the funds contained in the temple (Aelius *Orat.*23.24).
- The wealth of the temple was so important that Lysimachus transferred control of it from the priests to the more trustworthy gerousia (Strabo 14.1.21).

The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was "internationally recognized as *the place of refuge*" for those seeking protection and asylum. (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:44)

- Furthermore, the temple was "filled with great works of art" (Rogers 2012:7), and it attracted many thousands of visitors each year, bringing wealth into the city.

Festivals- The Artemisia was celebrated in the month of the Artemision (March - April), and presumably involved athletic and musical competitions, as well as plays and theatrical displays.

- Xenophon of Ephesus describes how this festivity was expanded beyond a religious context, and in fact became a popular event for men and women to choose their fiancés, which apparently drew in both locals and foreign visitors (Xenophon of Ephesus 1.2.2-4).

The Temple of Artemis was a temple *dedicated to the power, beauty and strength of women.*

- Marble artisans from all over the world [carved Amazon women into the base](#) of the 120 columns.
 - Amazons were "[warrior women](#)" from an area north of Ephesus and the Black Sea (modern Ukraine).
 - These Amazon women were known for their fierce fighting ability, and had been made famous by the Greek poet [Homer in his portrayal of them in *The Iliad*](#).
- Homer (c. 750 B.C.) also gave tribute in *The Iliad* [to Artemis](#), the Greek goddess of women and of war.
 - Artemis is called by Homer "*Artemis the Hunter, Queen of the Wild Beasts*" (Iliad 21.470).
- **Not surprisingly, Ephesus, above all other places in the ancient world, celebrated the power, strength, and beauty of women and their ability to use their sexual prowess to manipulate and dominate men.**

If worshiped properly, and prayed to during childbirth, Artemis promised to deliver women from death while giving birth.

- For this reason, women in the ancient world revered and worshipped Artemis.

Likewise, men worshipped Artemis during times of battle and war.

- Since the ancient world was always at war, Artemis was often on the lips of men during times of battle.
- The Greek men (and later the Romans) prayed to Artemis (the Romans called her [Diana](#)), not Apollo, in times of battle.
 - In Greek mythology, Zeus fathered the twins Artemis and Apollo through [the Titaness Leto](#).
 - The Artemis cult taught that Artemis was superior to Apollo because *she came (was born) first*.

- Men came to Artemis acknowledging their need of her strength during times of war.
 - The men would hold up their hands, palms up, just above their waist, as they prayed for victory in battle.

When men and women entered the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, the women would wear fancy hair braids, and bedeck themselves with jewelry and ornate clothes as they prayed to Artemis.

- The women worshiped Artemis with their clothing, jewelry, and their words.
 - [Heliodorus](#) said, "Their locks of hairs carry their prayers."
- **Artemis, in turn, gave them their sexual prowess over men, and their deliverance during childbirth.**

The Temple operations, which included prostitution, and craftsmen who sold gold and silver idols of Artemis, drove the economy of Ephesus.

- Hundreds of thousands of people visited the city annually.

So what does all this tell us?

The culture in Ephesus was rooted in the worship of Artemis and her temple. When we read about Paul's ministry in Ephesus, or his letters to Timothy who stayed in Ephesus after Paul left, we need to understand what was written in the context of that culture.

[1Tim. 2:8-15](#)

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. ⁹ *Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,* ¹⁰ *but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.* ¹¹ *A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.* ¹² ***But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*** ¹³ *For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.* ¹⁴ *And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.* ¹⁵ ***But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.***

So knowing what we do about the influence of Artemis-worship in Ephesus, it isn't difficult to see how female hierarchy might have been a cultural problem for the Ephesian church.

- Christians have debated the role of women in the church for centuries, and many have looked to what Paul said in [1Tim 2:12](#) as a prohibition of women teachers.
- However, it should at least be considered that Paul was addressing the cultural norms of female hierarchy in Ephesus specifically, rather than banning women from teaching universally.

When Paul addresses how women are to dress in [1Tim 2:9](#), he could be specifically teaching against the common practice of Ephesian women to use sexy clothing, jewelry, and hairstyles to attract powerful men and seduce them in order to raise their social status.

Paul's reference to the created order of men and women in [1Tim 2:13-14](#), may also be addressing a false doctrine popular in Ephesus at that time.

- A popular doctrine in Ephesus, at the time of Paul's letter to Timothy, taught that, from creation, Eve was given a special position above Adam.
- The origins of this doctrine seem to have started in cults outside the church, but may have begun to trickle in, thus prompting Paul to address it.

[1Tim 2:15](#) has been particularly difficult to understand; but in light of Artemis' role as midwife and protector, it might be easier to understand what Paul was teaching.

- Pregnant women often died in childbirth, especially since the average woman in that culture would get married and begin having children around 14 years old.
- Artemis worshipers thought she had the power to keep both the mother and child safe in childbearing, and also to take life quickly if things went badly, so neither mother nor child would have to suffer long.
- It seems likely that Paul was teaching the women in the Ephesian Church to trust in God and serve Him—HE will keep you safe in childbirth... not Artemis!