

Acts 19:19-32 NASB

“When Paul caused a riot”

“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.

“²¹ 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.’

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 they were filled with rage, and 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 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.”

Jesus said:

“I am the way, and the truth and the life.”¹

¹ John 14:6 NIV.

Verse 23 of our text refers to the lifestyle and teachings of Jesus, as "the Way."

"The Way" clearly shook the ancient city of Ephesus:

"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 of pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing."

Norma and I received invitations to the Magic Castle in Hollywood, where professional magicians performed.

As we dined courtesy of our hosts, we saw some impressive acts.

Never did we think we saw supernatural things; only slight-of-hand and illusory tricks.

Magic Castle in Hollywood



Blair photo of The Library of Celsus ruins in Ephesus

Some cultures believe in magic and the occult. Charlatans use subtle tricks to create fear in others and to exert power over them.

Norma and I knew Hollywood people who consulted fortune tellers, preachers, and other quacks who claimed paranormal powers.

A young woman came to my office at the Hollywood church building saying that an enemy held her under a voodoo hex.

Claiming that at that moment someone was pushing needles into a voodoo doll with her as the target, she screamed and writhed in pain.

How did Jesus' good news affect people?

Ephesus folks involved in magic and the occult confessed how they'd deceived others and then they burned their how-to-books.

A piece of silver (a drachma) amounted to a day's wage.

If I calculated correctly, 50,000 drachmas equal 137 years pay—if you work 365 days a year, and you don't suffer 6% a year annual inflation.

"So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing."

Jesus' Way frees people, who are enslaved to superstition, fear, hate, and worry.

- At the same time, the Lord's Way upset many folks in Ephesus.

Why would someone object to anything that frees folks from false notions and mind enslavement?

People came from all over the world to the shrine of Dianna, also known as Artemis.

The original building (one of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World) exceeded a football field in square footage.

A madman burned the original temple (built 550 BC, destroyed 356 BC); some historians say a flood destroyed the structure.

Devotees later built a second version.²

Tradition said that the goddess Dianna or Artemis came from out of the sky.

Apparently a meteorite fell to earth near the city, which an artisan shaped into the image of a standing woman with numerous appendages on her front side.

Scholars once considered the Ephesus Dianna a multi-mammary fertility goddess. Later evidence suggests she more likely represented female superiority.

Followers claimed Artemis emasculated numerous powerful males and the appendages represented her victory trophies.

The Dianna Temple produced vast wealth.

Olympic type games, music and oratory festivals, and other events were held in Dianna's honor.

Craftsmen made souvenir shrines of Dianna for tourists.

The temple also served as regional bank and museum.

I've not read of any runs on the Ephesus bank.



Model of Temple Tim Abbott. Flickr

² They built the temple on marshy ground using various components to withstand earthquakes. Invading Goths destroyed the 2nd version in the 3rd century AD.

What inflamed the Ephesus riot?

A modern translation of the silversmith’s speech helps us understand the matter.

Demetrius called the workmen together and said: “Gentlemen, this business is our income. As you know so well from what you’ve seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many, many people that handmade gods are not gods at all. As a result, our sales volume is going down! And this trend is evident not only here in Ephesus, but throughout the entire province. Of course I am not only talking about the business aspects of this situation and our loss of income, but also the possibility that the temple of the great goddess Dianna will lose its influence.”³

What we treasure most makes a difference.

Dianna represented money, influence, and power to Demetrius and the workmen.

That’s why many people join parties, clubs and even some churches.

They see the organization as way to further their greatest ambitions.

The church, on the other hand, glorifies God, our Creator, not any human being or group.

The letter to the Ephesus church emphasizes:

“His (God’s) intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”⁴

Did you know that another powerful church was working in Ephesus?

It had more members than God’s church.

Far different goals motivated that group.

The Lord willing we’ll talk about that other “church” next Sunday.



In closing, let’s speak of Jesus’ way.

During his ministry, Jesus performed dozens of miracles and fed thousands of people.

Have read of Jesus ever asking for money?

A few wealthy people donated to his ministry, but apparently not because Jesus asked them.

A rich young ruler wanted to know what he lacked to attain eternal life; Jesus advised:

“Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”⁵

³ *The New Testament in Today’s Language*, Act 19: 25-27 Tim Abbott Flickr

⁴ Ephesians 3:10-12 NIV

⁵ Luke 18:22 NIV

He didn't tell the man to donate to him and his disciples; Jesus said: "give (directly) to the poor."

Check virtually any Christian website, and you'll be asked to "Donate."

Many churches charge dues or they ask for annual pledges.

Do you recall what the Paul said in Scripture?

"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income."⁶

Some church groups (NGOs) now earn big money from the U.S. government for placing illegal immigrants throughout the country.

If they are doing "God's work," why do they take taxpayer funds to accomplish it?

Greed is wrecking the world and many churches.

Jesus' way relates to another issue: Immorality of church members.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul ordered the church to quickly and fairly deal with an immoral person.

Paul insisted that they obey instructions they'd already received.

If you attend a church that follows the Lectionary and don't thoroughly read your Bible,

you might not know this Scripture.

Even Christians who do read their Bibles seem to have trouble following the clear instructions:

"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

"But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked person from among you.'" 1 Cor. 5:9-13 NIV

Most Christians seem to have this backwards, don't they?

They criticize people in the world.

They tolerate greed, etc. within the church.

I pray that we shall all humbly submit to God our Creator, live by His standards, and share Jesus so others can be free.

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God's Creation

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⁶ 1 Corinthians 16: 2 NIV