

"The rioters' church"

(From last week)

Acts 19:32-41

"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."

Events in today's text tell of innocent men facing a furious mob.

What upset this unruly mass?

Workmen thought their livelihoods in jeopardy. They manufactured and sold souvenir shrines of the goddess Artemis.

The Temple and worship of Artemis were main attractions in Ephesus.

Paul had been teaching and preaching in Ephesus and had won many converts.

People who believed in Jesus the Son of the God quit worshiping Artemis.

They didn't buy or need those shrines.

God, who created all things doesn't need a visible, human-made temple, building, or shrine. Demetrius, a chief manufacturer, was enraging his fellow laborers against the Apostle Paul.

Paul's teaching would ruin the Ephesus economy and its religion, Demetrius claimed.

"This Paul is going to put us all out of business!"

That part was unrealistic and untrue.

As dead fish draw flies, folks rush to happenings.

Crowds of people flocked to the scene.

The following photo of Ephesus ruins shows how accurately Acts 19 describes the event.

That huge amphitheater frequently hosted music, acting, oratory, and sports contests.

They inscribed winners' names on pillars, steles, etc. probably memorializing them with the same "permanence" that Halls of Fame currently boast.¹

Shops would have lined the busy broad street.

Folks easily accessed the 25,000 capacity theater.



Demetrius convinced and enraged them.

Imagine the amphitheater filled with angry folks.

For two hours, they vented allegiance to their "powerful god" that now seemed impotent.

One of the first Greek words I learned by age 12 was the term for church.

Preachers often talked about that word and a few other Greek terms.

Most folks with a church of Christ background know that the word translated church is *ecclesia*. Matthew 16:18, Jesus said: "On this rock (petra) I will build my church;" the Greek term is *ecclesia*.

When preachers discuss *ecclesia*-church, they usually mention its etymology or origin.

Ecclesia is from a Greek preposition *ek*, meaning "out" and the verb *kaleo*, which means "to call."

Word meanings often change over time.

Our text illustrates variation in the term *ecclesia*.

In fact the word *ecclesia* appears three times in the original of today's text.

It's found in the Greek of verses 32, 39, and 41.

You don't see the word *church* in those verses, though; you'll find another word in all three.

Can you identify it?

The last Greek word in chapter 19 is *ecclesia*(n).

Most English versions translate the Greek term *ecclesia* as "assembly" in those verses.

¹ See the page 6 for details of a fascinating archaeological discovery.

In the *New Testament*, *ecclesia* refers to an assembly or group; never a building or edifice.

If *ecclesia* refers to an assembly, how do we distinguish one group from another?

A second term helps us identify God's people.

The word was present in last week's reading.

Last week's complete text is on page 7.

Acts 19:28 gives the key: "When they heard this and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'"

With what are you filled?

What dominates your heart and mind?

Stomp on a can of full of honey and

you could find some sweet stuff on your foot and leg.



Stomp on a can full of gasoline and you might spark a Molotov cocktail.



The bitter, rage-filled Ephesians caught fire.

In the letter he later wrote the Ephesus church, (chapter 4:17) Paul said: "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind . . ."

Allowing bitterness and anger to dominate our minds always lead nowhere—to futility.

Rage never ends positively or happily.

Verse 4: 20:

"You did not learn Christ in this way."

V. 22

"In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self . . ."

In other words, we stop allowing this stuff to accumulate and fill our hearts and minds.

Vss. 23, 24

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

Vss.31, 32

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

What fills your heart and mind?

A psychology professor was testing his students.

He asked a question concerning manic depression.

"What would you call someone," the question read, "who walks back and forth screaming at the top of his lungs one minute and then sits in a chair and weeps uncontrollably the next?"

One of the students answered,

"A basketball coach."

Paul counselled us in the Lord re: mind-filling:
"So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father..."²

We should be singing about God's greatness to one another and constantly praising God.

If we kept track of our words for a week, what percentage of speech would we have spent praising God, expressing thanksgiving, and encouraging others?

Some years ago, when driving to Omaha, we stopped at the McDonald's in Onawa, Iowa. As I entered I met a man, whom we knew well. He was a good man; a member of a church in another town.

He and his wife owned and operated a successful business and lived comfortably.

They were returning from an extended trip.

He spent the next several minute telling me about a wrong he'd recently suffered.



The longer our friend talked, the greater a realization overwhelmed and shamed me.

As he detailed his misery, the more I recognized my own speech; how I've spent a lot of my life spewing details of offenses against me.

"Goodness, is this how I sound?" I kept thinking.

I wish I could say I quit complaining then.

There's a place for speaking frankly, for which Ephesians 4: 26 guides us:

"Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."

At sunset, we usually secure our houses.

When we lock our doors, the Bible says: it's time to shut out the devil, too.

If we're still dwelling on an offense after dark, we've left our doors open for Satan.

You possibly know the expression: **"The more I think about it, the madder I get."**

We can control our minds and can choose to think about other things.

That's why Paul advised:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in

² Ephesians 5:16-20 NASB

everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ² And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

“⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”³

If you have a nice green, plush lawn and you start taking short cuts across the edge of it, you'll soon have an ugly brown, weedy path.

It's easy to take that path once it's there, isn't it?

You restore the green by staying off of it.

Our brains take the easy circuits; they tend to run in "worn paths."

The more we use those circuits, the more readily they come to mind.



When we're tempted to take an angry path,

we stop and dwell on things worthy of praise.

When we take our minds off of disturbing things, we eventually forget them.

We exalt God;

remember His goodness;

His forgiveness in Christ;

We thank Him and glorify Him.

There are endless reasons to be grateful and to praise Our Creator.

We fill out hearts and minds with his love.

I pray that we, our loved ones,

our neighbors,

and our enemies

will come to know his merciful love in Christ,

openly praise Him,

and live by His Word and Spirit.

To Him be the glory forever in our

Ecclesia-assembly-His church!

See page 6 for fascinating archaeological discoveries related to recognition and status given athletes, musicians, dancers, speakers, etc. during the first century A.D.

Full text of last week's reading on page 7.

³ Phillipians 4:4-8 NASB

DCXI.

A stele of white marble: height 3 ft. 6½ in.; width 1 ft. 9 in. Discovered by Mr. Wood; Inscriptions from the Great Theatre, No. 14.

<p>ΕΦΕΣΗΤΑΜΕΓΑΛΑΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΕΙΑΕΝΤΕΡΓΑΜΩ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΑ ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΟΛΥΜΠΕΙΑΕΝΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ 5 ΤΗΝΕΞΑΡΓΟΥΣΑΣΠΙΔΑ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΝΕΜΕΙΑΕΝΑΡΓΕΙ ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΠΑΝΕΛΛΗΝΙΑΕΝΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑΕΝΤΡΑΛΛΕΣΙ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΙΣΘΜΙΑ ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ 10 ΔΙΔΥΜΕΙΑΕΝΜΕΙΛΗΤΩ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΚΟΙΝΟΝΑΣΙΑΣΚΥΖΙΚΩ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΑΣΚΛΗΠΕΙΑΕΝΤΕΡΓΑΜΩ·ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑΕΝΤΑΡΣΩ ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ ΑΝΑΖΑΡΒΟΝΑΝΔΡΩΝΤΕΪΑΘΛΟΘ (Space of four lines here uninscribed.) 15 ΑΓΩΝΟΘΕΤΟΥΝΤΟΣΔΙΑΙ ΩΝΟΣ·ΤΙΒ·ΙΟΥΛ·ΡΗΓΕΙΝΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΩΣ·Β·ΝΑΩΝΤΩΝ ΕΝΕΦΕΣΩ ΥΠΟΑΛΕΙΠΤΗΝ·Γ·ΚΟΣΙΝΙΟΝ</p>	<p>[Ὁ δείνα τοῦ δείνους κ.τ.λ. νεικήσας] 'Εφέσσα τὰ μεγάλα, στάδιον Αὐγούστεια ἐν Περγάμῳ, στάδιον 'Ισθμια, στάδιον 'Ολύμπεια ἐν Ἀθήναις, στάδιον 5 τὴν ἐξ Ἄργους Ἀσπίδα, στάδιον Νέμεια ἐν Ἀργεῖ, στάδιον Πανελλήνια ἐν Ἀθήναις, στάδιον 'Ολύμπια ἐν Τράλλεσι, στάδιον 'Ισθμια, στάδιον 10 Διδύμεια ἐν Μειλήτῳ, στάδιον Κοινὸν Ἀσίας ἐν Κυζίκῳ, στάδιον Ἀσκληπεία ἐν Περγάμῳ, στάδιον 'Ολύμπια ἐν Ταρσῷ, στάδιον Ἀνάζαρβον, ἀνδρῶν πένταθλον. 15 Ἀγωνοθετοῦντος δι' αἰ- ῶνος Τιβ. Ἰουλ. Ῥηγείνου, ἀρχιερέως β ναῶν τῶν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, ὑπὸ ἀλείπτῃν Γ. Κοσίνοιον.</p>
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Record of the success of an athlete who had won the foot race (στάδιον) at various games, in particular at Ephesus (line 1); and also the Pentathlon at Anazarbos in Cilicia (line 14). The opening lines containing his name are lost; but compare Nos. DCV *ante* and DCXVI *post* which show how such lists were headed. The games here enumerated are for the most

3 P

In the 1850s and 60s, European archaeologists discovered numerous finds in areas known from the Bible. They carefully documented the inscriptions on larger objects. Smaller items were placed in European museums.

A few years ago, I was able to obtain for study a copy of *The Collection of Ancient Greek Manuscripts in the British Museum, Part III, PRIENE, IASOS, and EPHESES (Ephesus)*. The Cherokee Public Library arranged for me to have this copy on loan for several weeks from the Iowa State University Library.

British architect, engineer, and archaeologist John Turtle Wood excavated numerous parts of ancient Ephesus. To the left is document DCXI (611), in which Mr. Wood described the object, a white stele, or

section of marble. He tells where he found it--at the Great Theater in Ephesus.

He included the inscriptions as he found them in uncial Greek (capital letters in left column).

The right column shows the info in small Greek letters. As Wood noted, the artifact shows the wins attained by a famous athlete. The top bracketed line on the right ends with a form of the word *nike*, winner. The man excelled in an event known as the *stadion*, the term that appears consistently on the far right of both columns (ΣΤΑΔΙΟΝ-στάδιον). A *stadion* was apparently a running event of about 210 yards, maybe akin to a present 200 meter event.

The athlete won the great Ephesus contest, (line 1). Also the Augustus games in Pergamum, (line 2). The Isthmian games, likely in Corinth, (line 3). The Olympic games in Athens, (line 4). Olympics in Tarsus, (line 13)

Also he won the Pentathlon in Anazarbos, Cilicia. Line 14 seems to tell of his name being enshrined in the Ephesus Temple.

Life's interests do not seem to change, do they?

Contests of strength, endurance, voice, speech, dance, acting, and mental acuity tend to create human idols, which folks have always adored and worshiped. Mr. Wood even found one inscription (DCVI) memorializing a boy comic actor. Actors apparently became increasingly idolized.

Bob Blair, 3-26-23



Stadion-stadium at the site of first Olympics near Katakolo, Greece.



Birthplace of the Olympics. World class athletes likely paraded down this street.

Last week's text from Acts 19:23-31 NASB

“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 who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater.”

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