

Acts 19:1-20 "In Ephesus" 10/27/2024

Review:

Last week, we had a break in our study of Acts to hear a rare topical sermon on a very Biblical issue of the hatred of God. I appreciate Bob not only filling in but also for tackling a difficult subject.

Two weeks ago we looked at Apollos. We talked about the decline of Christianity in America and the 1000 churches that are closing up shop every year in the US. Luke breaks away from the general narrative about Paul to highlight this individual named Apollos. We saw how our preaching and indeed our lives should be Biblical, passionate and theologically accurate. In addition to having bivocational pastors and ... to combat the declining trend of Christianity in America, we need the right kind of preaching and Christians in general.

Intro:

Paul's third, and final recorded missionary journey started in 18:23. There are helpful maps, timelines and guides showing graphically the trips that Paul takes. I encourage everyone to look at these online and in your Bibles. One helpful timeline is on <https://www.understandchristianity.com/timelines/>

Today, we return to Paul as the central figure in the narrative. **All of chapter 19 happens in Ephesus.** It is a town in Asia minor, modern day Turkey. It is the town that Paul wrote the letter to that we have in our New Testament. It is fairly short, only six chapters and you can read it relatively easily in one sitting.

I. Kingdom of God (1-10; esp v8)

Influence of John the Baptizer. (Let's call him "the baptizer" not Baptist. He wasn't Baptist like we think of. That didn't exist for another 1600 years.)

Holy Spirit and Jesus (v2-5)

Miracles (v6)

12 men -small beginnings

Three months in the synagogue -KOG

John (the baptizer), Jesus, Paul, Apostles -all preached about the Kingdom of God.

Rule of God **now on planet earth.** What did John the forerunner and Jesus both say about the nature of the timing of the kingdom? “Repent! For the kingdom of God is at hand” Matt 3:2; Matt 4:17; Jesus says in Mark 1:15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Because God’s rule is now present, people should turn away from their sins and trust Christ. This is the consistent message of the New Testament.

Controversy about one or two kingdoms.

Historic overcorrection for abuse. The reason that the two-kingdom theory was popularized is because of an over emphasis on the abuses of the one kingdom position where the church and the state were the same. Calvin was probably the most articulate at proposing that Christ was indeed over both, but ruled them separately. There is a helpful article by Robert Godfrey outlining the historical development

<https://www.wscal.edu/resource/kingdom-and-kingdoms/>

Modern situation: out of control. With our modern (postmodern) circumstances, we see the degradation of Protestant Christian culture. The rise of both Roman Catholicism with its nominalism and general superstition and outright paganism have severely eroded the foundations that our country was built on, namely Calvinistic Christianity. The moral decay and overt perversion of our society is accelerating at a rapid pace. There are those in our camp who are divided over the idea of Christian Nationalism. Let me just say for the record that anyone opposing what they think is Christian Nationalism should be honest in their assessment and at least read the little book by Isker and Torba. It is disingenuous to mischaracterize and misrepresent the position. All they are really saying is that no government is neutral. It is more or less inclined to Christ and His law than others. We want ours to be faithful to its roots and honor Christ. People need to quit losing their minds and more importantly, slandering brothers who just want to restore our nation to a people who honor God in both spheres.

Hardened (v9)

Two years in school of Tyrannus (v10)

Footnote in some older manuscripts that says that he spent 11am – 4pm teaching five hours a day.. Over two years, five to seven days a week, that is fifteen to eighteen hundred hours of instruction. More than modern pastors receive in preparation for ministry.

II. Results of the KOG

“All” v10, v17: “All” without distinction as v17 makes explicit. Not “all” without exception. This is one main point about hermeneutics or biblical interpretation. We don’t get to just say or believe or defend whatever we want. We must let the Bible speak for itself and interpret it consistently. The Bible says that the whole world went out to see John. Do we believe that every single individual on planet earth saw him? Of course not, it means that everyone without distinction, not everyone without exception, saw him. He was popular and known to everyone in that area.

I’m bringing this up because of the common misunderstanding that the word “all” always and without exception means every single person who has ever existed. Preachers will say “all means all. No one is excluded.” Well, that is not the correct use of the word. Both words, “all” and “world” were not used this way in the New Testament. They meant that both Jews and Greeks, men and women, rich and poor, were in the audience or were receptors of the grace of God, or whatever the passage is pointing out. It is not saying what many claim. If you want to go further down this rabbit hole, I highly recommend the book *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective (Doctrines of Grace)*. It’s not cheap at about \$40 but is the richest and most helpful book on the issue. Again, I bring this up because of how Luke specifically uses the term “all” in vs 10 & 17 is a great example of how this language is used in the NT.

1. Miracles

Vs 11 & 12 have been mocked and faux replicated by shyster charismatic personalities. This is almost always an attempt to remove money from desperate and ill-informed people and put it in the “preacher’s” pocket. Reminder that the point of miracles was to validate the claims of the apostles. In other words, miracles were God’s way of proving that what they were saying was true.

That said, there have always been miracles of some sort throughout the history of the church. Where God’s word is preached, people are healed and come to Christ. This is especially true in missionary situations.

2. Demonic Activity

Seven sons of Sceva (say that three times fast). Sounds like a tongue twister. They start rebuking evil spirits in the name of “Jesus whom Paul preaches” v13. V15 is a helpful insight to this kind of activity and I think can help inform us about the workings of the demonic.

Many people today, say things like “not today, Satan.” Or they want to rebuke the devil. Or say some other sort of incantation in the name of Jesus. This type of behavior ignores passages like this where demons are seen to have very serious power and are far more concerned with big issues more than our everyday parking habits or daily frustrations.

Look at v15. They know Jesus. They’d heard of Paul. The fact that they’ve merely “heard” of Paul should help us understand something. I doubt that demons know many of us. The guy who was the primary missionary, theologian, and author of the New Testament, was vaguely familiar to the demons! People make all kinds of excuses for their behavior and even sometimes blaming the devil. This is not permitted. James says we are led astray by our own passions. John says the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life entangle us. Paul spends no small amount of ink on the idea that the flesh (some people call the sin nature) is inside us warring against the things of God. It is sin in us, more than some kind of demonic attack.

Do we see that demons indeed exist? Of course. Are they stealing, and killing, and destroying? YES! I myself have seen, on rare occasions, what I believe to be demonic activity. However, in our everyday lives, it is far more likely that the flesh in us is to blame for our problems than some sort of demonic attack. Nevertheless, when the Kingdom of God is taking over serious ground from the enemy, he and his minions do not go quietly.

3. Fear of the LORD (v17) FOTL is the beginning of wisdom. Repent and believe. Be converted. Be consistent. Be faithful.

“The Name” (v4, 5, 14 & 17) see other Acts references

4. Public confession (v18) James 5:16 “confess your sins to one another and pray for one another” Herer, people were being transparent about their sin and repenting of it. Speaking of repentance...

5. Elimination of witchcraft (v19). This is repentance. The turning away from sin and sinful lifestyles. There is no middle ground. It’s either Christ or chaos.

6. Success: Word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing (v20)

This is the KOG. Jesus is taking ground. This is the rule of God being extended on earth as it is in heaven. People are being saved and discipled. “Growing mightily and prevailing” doesn’t mean just getting by. It doesn’t mean just existing. It doesn’t mean that they were just going along with the status quo. No! There was real growth and forward movement. There was victory. It says “prevailing.” Over what or whom was the word of the Lord prevailing? It was

over the enemy. It was over the forces of darkness. Jesus was whipping the devil in and through the work of the early church. This cheap, bargain basement, Kmart blue light special Christianity has to go. Presbyterians have been guilty for far too long of sitting around in their lofty theology but not experiencing the power of the move of the Holy Spirit. I'm not talking about Charismatic, Pentecostal foolishness and nonsense. I'm talking about deep, true, intellectual, emotional movement from God Himself. Not something manufactured or orchestrated by men but instead the very touch of God. The kingdom of God was advancing.

Postmill -the idea that the KOG is advancing and Christ is winning and will win. Things, over a long enough time horizon will get better. You may not see it for decades or even centuries, but His Kingdom is marching on. Those who started this country believed this.

This truth flies in the face of dower, pessimistic, complaining. It is inconsistent with Christianity to be anxious, worrisome and overly negative. It is not our religion to be defeatist and weak. Christianity is a vibrant, risk taking, exercise in the sovereignty of God. We do not shrink back from confrontation, suffering, persecution, demonic opposition, calamity or anything else. Read the end of Romans 8. We are overwhelming conquerors in because nothing can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus our Lord!

Application and Conclusion:

1. Pray "Your kingdom come, Your will be done ON EARTH as it is in heaven."
2. Take responsibility for your sin. Confess it. Repent. Serve the Lord.
3. Make preparation for our yearly Bible reading starting in January.

Closing Prayer:

Our God and Father, indeed, may the glory of Your name and the extension of Your will be present in and through us here and now. In us as individuals, families, households, in our city, and state, and nation. Let us be a people who extend Your rule and reign now and forevermore. And now, as we take the Lord's supper, we remember the death of the Lord Jesus, that He gave His life as a ransom for many. In His name we pray, Amen.