**Introduction – Paul’s Third Missionary Journey, Part 2 – 19:11–19:41**

* **General Overview:** This is part 2 of Paul’s third missionary journey, and now that Paul has turned mainly to the Gentiles (19:9–10), we get to see how the gospel has the power to defeat demons and dethrone the idols that enslave the societies of the world. The only true antidote for chaos is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and unbelieving Jews have nothing like it.
  + **Day 1:** This section (19:11–17) compares the spiritual power of Paul to the spiritual impotence of unbelieving Jews. In the end, we see that God is on the side of Jews who embrace Jesus—and He’s very much *not* on the side of those who reject Him.
  + **Day 2:** This section (19:18–20) expands the point of the earlier section by showing how unbelieving Jews could do nothing to prevail upon a single demonic opponent, while the word of Jesus is powerful enough to overthrow demonic strongholds across an entire city.
  + **Day 3:** This section (19:21–27) mentions Paul’s plans to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome, but before that, we see how the cultural transformation taking place in Ephesus (due to the gospel) is proving to be bad news for idol makers. We see an Ephesian business mogul incite a near-riot over the fact that Paul/the gospel threaten the profits they were gaining from idolatry, and the scene then sets up for an illustration of why it’s important for Paul to be allowed to dive into that chaos and proclaim the gospel *there too*.
  + **Day 4:** This section (19:28–34) highlights the tension of how Paul *wanted* to dive into the angry mob, as he had done before (cf. 14:14), but other disciples were preventing him from doing so. So while it may seem like his friends had his best in mind, Paul has already shown how it is *through many afflictions they must enter the kingdom of God* (14:22), and so he’s willing to get roughed up if he has to. However, Luke’s latter half of this section illustrates how, in the absence of Paul diving in to restrain pagan crowds, the unbelieving Jews swoop in to offer a solution that only makes things worse. Without Paul being allowed to engage the world with real power, pagan cries just get louder.
  + **Day 5:** This section (19:35–41) closes by providing a kind of quasi-resolution to the story. The tug-of-war between paganism and the gospel is not over, but for now everyone goes their separate ways. Reason? A city official stepped in to deescalate the situation and funnel all complaints into the courts so Rome wouldn’t catch wind of the unrest. This man tries to reassure the people that their city’s pagan prestige will be just fine and that there’s no real threat to be seen in Paul’s companions. But still, we know this city official is just trying to cover his tail, and we walk away knowing that the gospel holds the power to transform a culture wholesale. The pagans wouldn’t have stood a chance.

**19:11–17 – True Power Resides with the Christians**

* **Overview:** This section compares the spiritual power of Paul to the spiritual impotence of unbelieving Jews. In the end, we see that only those who embrace Christ and have the Holy Spirit can be spiritual authorities. This is why the section ends with the unbelieving Jews in disrepute while “the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified” (19:17). Again, God is on the side of the true Jews, those who believe in Jesus.
* **Vv. 11–12 –** These verses begin the broader section with a summary description of Paul’s spiritual power and authority.This is the baseline that prepares the readers to see how, by contrast, any unbelieving Jews who try to act like they’re on Paul’s level fall hard. Four facts are important to highlight here:
  + **GOD is at work in Paul** – The text stresses the fact that “God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul” and from that we see that Paul is not acting on his own. The main point, rather, is that God stands behind this man.
  + **God is REALLY at work in Paul –** The text says that God was doing “extraordinary miracles”—as opposed to just “ordinary miracles.” In other words, God was turning Paul’s spiritual powers up to 11 to glorify Himself. So unlike how Moses and the magicians of Pharaoh went head-to-head and had some perceptible kind of “struggle” between them, God is showing that no one will be able to even try to compete with Paul.
  + **The Miracles Parallel Peter** – While the exact nature of these miracles is different from what Luke shares about Peter, the similarity exists in the fact that Luke describes both Peter and Paul as being capable of doing extraordinary things like this. Luke notes how Peter was effectively shadow healer (5:15), whereas Paul, as we learn here, could simply touch a “cloth or an apron” and when it was brought to a sick and demon possessed person, the person would be healed. The parallel further demonstrates that just as God was behind Peter, He’s also is behind Paul—even in the Gentile world.
  + **These Diseases are Demonic –** Luke’s language indicates that “the sick” are sick because of demonic spirits. This is why when he describes the healing of “the sick” (1 group) Luke says that “the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.” Of course, it is not always the case that *demons* cause sickness,[[1]](#footnote-1) but Luke has highlighted this kind of unique situation before, in his Gospel. In Luke 13:11, he says “there was a woman who…had a sickness caused by a spirit, and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.” However, much like how Jesus would at times heal people’s physical illness to illustrate the healing that has come to their soul in salvation, similarly here, the disease (visible ailment) is an illustration of an underlying spiritual condition. Given the context, the main focus here is on the demons, and whether the diseases leave the afflicted person serves as the proof of who holds power over the demons.
* **Vv. 13–16 –** These next few verses present the second half of the comparison—the wannabes. In dramatic fashion, Luke exposes how not even the seven sons of a Jewish chief priest have the power to do what Paul does. Though Paul has effectively left the ranks of (apostate) Judaism, he remains a Jew that unbelieving Jews can hold a candle to.
* Luke has structured the passage as a reversal (chiasm), highlighting how, when renowned Jewish exorcists try to do what Paul does, they soon find themselves beaten out of their clothes. The structure is approximately shown below:
  + 1. **High Status:** “Some of the Jewish Exorcists”
    2. **Roaming:** “Went from place to place”
    3. **Attempt to Subdue:** “Attempted to invoke the name of Jesus over those with evil

spirits,”

* + 1. **Statement of Jesus/Paul:** “I implore you by Jesus whom Paul preaches”
    2. **Jewish Status:** “Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this”

D’) **Statement of Jesus/Paul** “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are

you?”

C’) **Being Subdued:** “The man leaped on them, subdued all of them, and utterly prevailed

against them”

B’) **Fleeing:** “So they fled out of that house,”

A’) **Low Status:** “Naked and wounded”

* Luke’s structure of the story shows how Jewish authorities are no match for demonic power.
  + The high and mighty exorcists (A) who roam about freely (B) are soon found running away from a demon (B’) wounded and shamed in nakedness (A’).
  + In order to show how this debacle unfolded, Luke focuses is how their *words* do not carry the weight of those of Paul or Jesus (a key theme in Acts). These posers attempt to invoke Jesus’ name over a demon (C) by *proxy* (D), but the demon sees through it. It doesn’t recognize the status or authority or threat-factor of these so-called “exorcists” (D’) and so it turns the tables and exerts its own demonic authority over these men, utterly prevailing against them (C’). (Note the triple whammy Luke mentions in that 1 man (1) “leaped on them” (2) “subdued all of them,” and (3) “utterly prevailed against them.” So it wasn’t even a contest.)
  + Interestingly, Luke reserves the exact identity of these people until the middle of the structure so that it occupies the main focus of the scene. These are none other than the sons of a Jewish chief priest, the full representation (seven sons) of a premier leader (chief priest) of the unbelieving Jewish system. And yet, as the story goes on, Luke shows how *even they* were no match for true spiritual opposition. The demon doesn’t even *know who they are*. They never made it onto the “exorcist watch list.” So, naturally, this one demon prevails upon them and beats them into their birthday suits.
* Key facts:
  + **The Name of Jesus / Jesus whom Paul preaches –** Interestingly, the Jewish exorcists simply try to assert the authority of Jesus over this demon. However, the context shows that, because Jesus is not with them, He will not allow His name to be used like a magic wand. Furthermore, they try to invoke Jesus’ authority as if they were proxies for Paul’s ministry. But because they are not actually part of Paul’s ministry, we see that they do not actually hold any spiritual power. After all, God is not with them. So how could they?
  + **Seven sons of Sceva –** The mention of seven sons is important in light of how it’s been used throughout the Bible. In Ruth 4:15, Jeremiah 15:9, and Job 1:2 & 42:13, it indicates the strength and stability of one’s household. And in 1 Samuel 16:10, it appears to convey the wholeness of one’s line (as 7 can often indicate completion in Scripture). For those reasons, what we see here is that, by calling out the seven sons of Sceva, Luke is platforming the entire strength of this Jewish chief priest in order to highlight the shock of its downfall. When it comes to the reason for naming “Sceva” (Gk. *Skeuas*) it’s possible that the name could fall into the semantic range of words referring to “equipment” or “gear” (Gk. *skeue; skeuos*) which Luke uses elsewhere in the book and Theophilus could have picked up on (Acts 27:19; 10:11, 16; 11:5). If that’s the case, it could further reinforce the idea that these sons illustrate the resources of a chief priest.
* **V. 17 –** Verse 17 closes the first part of this narrative in saying that news of this embarrassing moment broke and reached to “all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus.” Again we see that Jewish unbelief serves to magnify the message of Jesus to the broader populace. Clearly, God wanted to make His point publicly, and He did, for the effect was that “fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.” In other words, the name of Jesus is not a magic wand to be waved around by just anyone. Rather, only He and those with Him have true spiritual power that can suppress demonic evil.

**Day 1 – Questions**

1. Why is it encouraging to see this illustration of how God stands behind His people?
2. Why doesn’t Jesus let unbelievers use His name and power in this situation?
3. How does this story show how Jewish unbelief amplifies the message of Jesus?

**Day 2 – Bankrupting the Market for Magic (19:18–20)**

* **Overview:** This section illustrates how the fear of the Lord Jesus leads peoples to (1) confess their sinful practices and (2) forsake their sinful practices. In context, this section further explains the social transformation that took place when God judged the unbelieving Jews in 19:11–17. As such, it gives a helpful glimpse into how the gospel holds the power to completely bankrupt a pagan culture.
* The structure of the passages is fairly simple:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Verse 18** | **Verse 19** |
| **Description** | many of those who had believed | many of those who practiced magic |
| **Public forsaking of sin** | kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices | Brought their books together and were burning them in the sight of everyone. |

* With this structure, Luke highlights two kinds of change that the broader society experienced as a result of the demonic debacle that took place in 19:11–17. We see that those who believed not only *publicly confessed* their sinful “practices” (v. 18), but we also see that those who “practiced magic” *publicly forsook* their sinful practices (v. 19). This is seen from the fact that Luke’s main verbs in these verses are how the believers “kept coming” and those who practiced magic “were burning” their books. The drama of the narrative hangs on those verbal ideas. And because both actions were done in public, they serve to magnify Jesus.
* For clarification, these are not necessarily separate groups, but they’re not necessarily exactly the same either. Luke’s use of Greek conjunctions indicate that he’s simply focusing on the same larger group from two angles. There might be overlap, but that’s not the point.

* **V. 18 –** When it comes to the first group of people Luke wants to focus on, his introduction determines how we read it. Luke uses a special word for “also” (Gk. *te*) to make a tight logical tie to the events of v. 17, showing us how the event with the sons of Sceva precipitated these people publicly confessing their former practices. In light of the grammar and the parallels to a similar scene in Acts 5,[[2]](#footnote-2) it’s likely that these people are *freshly* converted to Christ as a result of the judgment. Luke’s focus, however, is not so much the conversion as what they *did* to magnify the name of the Lord. He gives a picture of a stream of converts who “kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.” And in light of the way Luke uses the root word for “practices” in context (v. 19), it’s likely that the practices of these converts had at one point included magic specifically.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* **V. 19 –** In verse 19, Luke takes another angle at this large group of people who were brought into reverential fear. He uses a different conjunction to introduce the sentence (Gk. *de*), and it serves to give another angle on the same general event of how people are responding. Here, Luke highlights a second thing people were doing that glorified Jesus.
* In this case, there were people who practiced magic through the use of tools, and for that reason, the way they glorified God involved their participation in a public book burning to illustrate their abandonment of ungodly spiritual powers. The books would’ve involved spells and incantations, and Luke’s emphasis is that they burned them “in the sight of everyone,” again magnifying the power of Jesus.
* Moreover, as both an exclamation mark on this narrative and a tie-in to the next section (which focuses on how revival is bad news for pagan businesses), Luke adds the point that “they counted up the price of them [the books] and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” Schnabel notes how this “amounts to the yearly wage (with no days off) of 137 workers.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Polhill notes how “the drachma was an average day’s wage.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
* **V. 20 –** This verse gives a theological interpretation to what’s been happening. Luke’s focus is on how “the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing” in the Gentile world. The irony is that we just saw how the words of the sons of Sceva did diddly squat. Not only was the word of the Lord “growing mightily”—referring to the spread of it—but the word “prevailing” here is also the same word used earlier of how the demonic man of verse 16 subdued and “prevailed against” the sons of the chief priest. In light of that, Theophilus would see once again the absolute impotence of unbelieving Jewish ministers to overcome a single demon, whereas the word of Jesus is effectively on its way toward overthrowing the paganism of *an entire city*.

**Day 2 – Questions**

1. How does confession glorify God? Do *your* confessions glorify God?
2. How does our desire to glorify God help us gladly rid our lives of ungodliness?
3. Do you believe that God’s word carries the same potential power in your life as it does in this story?

**Day 3 – The Resurgence of the Pagan Marketeers (19:21–27)**

* **Overview:** This section illustrates how strongly the pagan world dislikes the transformation that comes from people turning to Christ. Luke has just introduced the monetary value of the books that were burned when people turned from practicing magic (v. 19), and this helps to prepare Theophilus to “follow the money” into this next section and see how pagan business moguls react when they see how the gospel proves to be bad news for their bank accounts.
* **Vv. 21–22 –** These two verses introduce the section with some logistical moves Paul is making as the journey continues. This prepares readers to see what’s in store for Paul’s future before they see him encounter some intense chaos in Ephesus.
  + Luke makes it clear that it was “after these things were finished” that Paul began to think about what’s next. Luke says, “Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia.”
  + His desire to revisit “Macedonia and Achaia” shows his recurring desire to help the believers where he had previously been. So his pull toward Jerusalem isn’t to the neglect of ministry elsewhere.
  + When it comes to Jerusalem, Paul has consistently gone there after every journey, but here Luke wants you to see more overtly how it was “the Spirit” who was guiding him there. This is not to say that the Spirit wasn’t behind his previous trips, but if you read ahead, you’ll see that this is a strategic statement because Jerusalem holds a lot of affliction for Paul (20:22*ff*; 21:13). However, it’s affliction that Paul is destined for, just as, in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus was also destined to suffer affliction in Jerusalem (Luke 9:51*ff*).[[6]](#footnote-6) In that sense, Theophilus could see Paul following in his Master’s footsteps. And just as Jesus’ suffering in Jerusalem didn’t end His ministry to the world, but actually amplified it beyond people’s wildest imaginations, neither will Jerusalem be the end of Paul’s ministry. Instead, it will serve to launch Paul to the end of the earth.
  + For example, even at this point in the journey Paul foresees that Jerusalem is a sort of steppingstone to “Rome.” Paul’s language in saying “I must also see Rome” uses a buzzword that’s used heavily throughout Luke’s entire 2-volume work (Gk. *dei*) that points the *necessary advancement of God’s* *plan* of bringing the gospel to the world.[[7]](#footnote-7) So for Luke put all these details together indicates that God has sovereignly put Rome in Paul’s future—and he will go through Jerusalem (affliction) to get there.

**Aside: Which S/spirit? –** Some people debate if this was simply Paul’s own spirit or the Holy Spirit, but the presence of the article (“the”) alongside the previous mentions of his journey being guided by the Spirit (Acts 13:4; 16:6), and the future statement that the Spirit of God was behind this (20:22–23),[[8]](#footnote-8) all support the case that this is the Spirit of God guiding his path.

* + Verse 22 shows how, like he did with Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, Paul stationed 2 people “ahead of him” to serve as a sort of “advance team” before he got there. In this case, it was “Timothy and Erastus,” and Luke doesn’t say exactly what they were going ahead of Paul to do. Rather, the focus is on how they were proven servants, since they “ministered to [Paul].” It may be the case that this is designed to show how Paul is now somewhat more vulnerable now, since “he himself stayed in Asia for a while.”
* **V. 23 –** This verse introduces the main theme of the rest of the chapter. Luke says, “About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.” By using this language, Luke is clearly wanting people to see (1) how great this disturbance was, and (2) how it centered around God’s revealed way of life (“the Way”). In other words, this is a clash of morality, of worldviews.
* **Vv. 24–25a –** Here Luke shows why the disturbance came about (“For”).
  + He begins with the main agitator, “a man named Demetrius.” This is a pagan name calling this man a devotee of the goddess Demeter, the goddess in charge of harvest and, generally speaking, production/prosperity. For that reason, there’s possible irony in his name, since Paul is upsetting the (wicked) production/prosperity of the people (19:25).
  + This man has a commendable job as “a silversmith,” but he’s employing it for evil ends, since his job was to make “silver shines of Artemis.” The repetition of “silver”—in light of the previous note about how the burning of magic books cost 50,000 pieces of “silver,” shows that Luke is preparing Theophilus to “follow the money” and see the role that greed played in sparking this riot.
  + Demetrius was apparently influential in his work, since he “was bringing no little business to the craftsmen” across the city. It’s critical to see here the callback to 16:16, since the “profit” that the servant-girl with spirit of divination brought to her masters is the same Greek word. From reading that earlier story, we know that Paul’s influence on a city proved bad for pagan business and sent the people foaming into an uproar. And because we’ve seen that before, we can see that much the same thing is happening again here. Luke’s already told us there’s “no small disturbance” coming, and here he’s showing it’s going to be big, since this Ephesian business mogul is seen deciding to form a coalition “with the workmen of similar *trades*.” Something big is happening.
* **V. 25b–27 –** Here the craftsman delivers his own crafty speech to get the crowd spun up. He says, “Men, you know that our prosperity is from this business.”
  + Right from the get-go we see that Demetrius zeroes in on the money. He’ll soon appeal to these men regarding the *religious* side of their enterprise, but in light of the context, Luke is drawing our main focus to the *monetary* side of things. For these men, it’s all about the money—and the gospel is changing what their customers do with their wallets.
* He goes on, “And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but almost in all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable crowd, saying that things made with hands are not gods.”
  + For how much of a bad guy Demetrius is, he’s a great speaker, and he knows how to persuade these people. His language for Paul’s message is not only calculated to offend the craftsmen who work “with hands,” but he’s also showing them how Paul is hindering their possibility of a massive profit to be gained from the whole region of Asia.
  + Additionally, for Theophilus, Luke’s inclusion of this language helps him to remember Paul’s message in Acts 17:29, where he called people to see that God is so much greater than any graven image that a man could craft.
* Demetrius then moves to his crowning point: “And not only is their danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be considered as worthless,” such that “she, whom all of Asia and the world worship, is even about to be brought down from her majesty.”
  + Notice he continues the monetary language, speaking of “this trade of ours” as well as how Artemis could be considered as “worthless”—again an indirect appeal to money.
  + Notice however how his language reads *to Theophilus*. From the earlier story in Acts 16, he would see right through the charade. He’d see this as a bunch of greedy pagans raising a fuss about how the gospel is threatening their cash cow. And the phrases that are designed to make these craftsmen wail is the thing that would make Theophilus cheer: their precious rock lady thing “is even about to be brought down from her majesty,” whereas, “the name of Jesus was being magnified” (9:17). Overall, then, things are looking good.

**Day 3 – Questions**

1. What is the importance of Jerusalem and Rome in Paul’s journeys in Acts?
2. What can you point to in your Bible to show that Demetrius is more concerned about money than his “goddess.”
3. How could Theophilus see good news behind Demetrius’s cry for outrage?

**Day 4 – Confusion & Chaos (19:28–34)**

* **Overview:** This section records the response of the Ephesian craftsmen to the speech of Demetrius. The section is bookended with the cry “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” and we see that, in the middle of the bookends, Paul is prevented from doing anything to stop it, and as a result the situation only gets worse and the outcries only get stronger.
* **V. 28 –** Demetrius evidently touched a nerve, since “when [the craftsmen] heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’”
* So these men effectively double down on the pride of their city. Since Demetrius said the “great goddess Artemis” might be dethroned from her “magnificence” (same root as the term “great”), the fact that they shout that Artemis is “Great” is their way of combatting Paul’s work. In other words, when your side is weak, yelling probably helps!
* Notice how calling out “Artemis of the Ephesians” draws attention—and money—to their business in Ephesus. And the fact that they’re now “filled with rage” hints that some sort of unpredictable violence may be in store for Paul. These people really don’t like when God messes with their bank accounts. In context, this becomes the impetus of the following narrative.
* **Vv. 29–31 –** The effect of this uproar is that “the city was filled with confusion.”
  + The next few phrases help to contrast the way that *Paul* wanted to respond to this with the way his “*friends in high places*” wanted him to respond.
  + Luke’s structure is as follows:
    1. “[The city] rushed **into the theater**”
    2. “**Dragging away** Gaius and Aristarchus—Paul’s traveling companions”
    3. “And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, **the disciples would not let him**”

B’) “And some of the Asiarchs—who were friends of his—**sent to him**”

A‘) “repeatedly urging him not to give himself **into the theater**”

* + In short, what we see is that Paul was being prevented from jumping into the chaos to try to stop it like he had done before (14:14). Specifically, we see that, on the one hand, his traveling companions being dragged away into the theater (v. 29), but on the other hand, we see some of Paul’s friends in high places (Asiarchs, political officials v. 31) repeatedly urged him *not* to venture into the theater (v. 31). So Paul is caught in the middle, and we see him *wanting* to dive into the chaos and follow his traveling companions on the path God leads them into (v. 30), but for some reason the disciples are preventing him from doing that. That’s the core of the conflict according to Luke’s structure; They do not see eye to eye.
  + Remarkably, this is the same dynamic we will see again later when Paul *wants* to go into Jerusalem, even though he’ll be afflicted there (20:22), while “the disciples” (21:4, same word) are repeatedly “urging him” not to go (21:12, same word as here).
  + What’s most important, though, is to keep in mind the previous story from Acts 14, when, in Lystra, Paul readily dove headlong into a chaotic pagan crowd and successfully restrained their evil with the truth of God (14:14, 18). And even when he was nearly killed for his witness, he *embraced* *that* as the path God had for him (14:22). Here, however, some disciples are trying to prevent him from suffering (not unlike what Peter tried on Jesus), and we will see from the next episode how damaging it is to prevent Paul from operating in the chaos. The irony! It’s actually more dangerous to play it safe.
* **Vv. 32–34a** – These verses include another structural reversal that shows how the unbelieving Jews are unable to stop the chaos of a Gentile riot. Paul is perfectly equipped by God with the tools that can stop the madness, but without him, the “tactics” of the Jews just make the situation worse.
  + The basics of Luke’s structure are as follows (taking language from the Greek):
    1. The people begin with lots of disparate “shouting” (Gk. *krazō*)
    2. The people in “confusion” **not knowing** on whose account they had come together
    3. A conclusion comes out of “the crowd” that it was on account of “Alexander”
    4. Because “The Jews had put him forward”

C’) “Alexander” wanted to present a defense to “the people/assembly”

B’) However, the people gain “recognition” (lit. **knowledge**) that Alexander was a Jew

A’) The people therefore give one long and unified “shout” for Artemis (Gk. *krazō*)

* + What this structure shows is that the way this crowd went from bad to worse—the way they went from disparate shouts (A) and confusion (B) to a unified shout *in favor of paganism* (A’)—was through the illogical actions of some unbelieving Jews (D).
  + The scene begins with disparate shouts (A) and Luke says people are understandably in confusion, not even knowing (lit.) on whose account they had come together (B). This language shows that they’re looking for someone to pin this on (and remember—*Paul’s not there*, and Demetrius said it was all his fault, 19:26). But then, a part of the crowd finds someone. They conclude it’s *Alexander’s* fault (C). They probably think they’re making headway, but Luke continues to explain to Theophilus how this is all ridiculous. Why him? Luke says, “The Jews had put him forward” so he could make a “defense.” Defense of what? Being put forward by their group, they probably intended for him to defend them from accusation,[[9]](#footnote-9) maybe by shifting attention to the Christians.[[10]](#footnote-10) But in their quest for self-preservation, they pushed this poor guy in front of a bunch of pagan hammers looking for a nail and made the whole situation worse. If this is the correct understanding, it illustrates how these Jews had a *spectacular* inability to read the room. Apparently most everybody but Paul in this story is acting in the interest of self-preservation (Demetrius & the craftsmen, the Jews, the city clerk), but the broader contextual focus for Luke is on how the Jews were especially blinded by it.
  + Alexander motions with his hand to *try to* quiet the crowd so he can give a defense to “the people” (C’; the same unique word used for “the people/assembly” that Paul *wanted* to engage with in 19:30). But here we see how *the Jews’* efforts to quiet the crowd totally backfire. Just like the they failed to cast out a demon earlier in the chapter, they failed to quiet a mob here. Their genius effort to exorcize a demon by proxy just made him even more dangerous, and their genius effort to quiet a riot by proxy/spokesperson had the same effect. By contrast, Paul had success restraining a pagan crowd in Lystra, and the city clerk will have success just a few verses after this, but the Jews are impotent.
  + Once the assembly got a good look at Alexander, the Jews’ plan fell apart. The crowd identifies Alexander as a Jew, and so he was perceived as an inherent threat to their pagan way of life (a sensibility we’ve seen before, 16:20–21). And since threats have a way of binding people together, the once-fractured crowd finally unites and shouts, in one voice, for two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” What a mess.

**Day 4 – Questions**

1. What motivates the craftsmen to start shouting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians”?
2. Why was it not necessarily a good idea to try to prevent Paul from getting involved in the scene at the theater?
3. How does this episode illustrate once again how the unbelieving Jews don’t have the solutions that the world needs?

**Day 5 – The Call to Keep Calm (19:35–41)**

* **Overview:** Before things spin completely out of control, we see that a kind of “saving grace” comes through, of all people, a civil magistrate. He’s not exactly righteous, though. He’s just trying to cover his tail, because after all, if imperial forces discovered a riot on his watch, Roman higher-ups could come in and deliver some…negative consequences.
* **V. 35a –** This verse introduces a thematic break to the story, as the city clerk steps onto center stage to quiet the crowd and speak some sense into them.
  + “The secretary of the [people] was the most powerful official of the city administration. He supervised municipal building projects, coordinated the erection of statues, and facilitated consecrations to the emperor. He was the contact person in the city administration for the imperial administrators living in Ephesus and thus the direct link between the citizens of Ephesus and the imperial government.”[[11]](#footnote-11)
  + Interestingly, his title in Greek is literally “the writer of the people,” and as such it draws attention to his words, since it’s his job to give an account to the Empire. This prepares us to see why the speech of this man, if we remove all the polish, is basically saying, “Everything will be OK. Please don’t freak out. *Please*.”
  + In the bigger picture, we see that, in the absence of Paul delivering words of life and hope and radical cultural transformation, a city like this can indeed achieve some form of peace, but the fact remains that the people living in those places are still under the sway of pagan ideas. In other words, a pagan society may be converted to general law and order, but that’s different from being converted to the Lord. This man doesn’t give a *real* solution to the problem. Just a pragmatic one.
* **Vv. 35b–40 –** The clerk’s speech is fascinating for several reasons.
  + First, notice how“He *quieted the crowd* by first suggesting the impossibility of undermining the worship of Artemis.”[[12]](#footnote-12) In other words, he believes their city’s role and reputation is invulnerable, and they will still command the respect of the world.

**Vv. 35b–36** –“Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians [i.e. us] is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the *image* which fell down from heaven? So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and do nothing rash.”

* + - Notice he appeals to their national pride, basically saying everyone knows who they are. Specifically, everyone has heard the tale that the city of the Ephesians (i.e. our great people) has been given the role of guarding Artemis’ temple and the image of her which fell down from heaven. So his appeal is to the authority of “Artemis” and how her statue simply “fell down from heaven.” The irony is rich. This all began with the *craftsmen* of the idols—those who make them with their hands—raising a fuss because Paul dared to say they weren’t actually fashioning gods with their chisels. Here, however, the city clerk is advancing the narrative that the main statue of Artemis located in the temple just “fell down from heaven.” Yeah. And Aaron’s golden calf just “walked” out of the fire by itself. “Undeniable facts.” Smooth.
    - Notice also how the craftsmen’s main concern was money but the city clerk’s main concern is peace. This is why the upshot of his argument is “keep calm”—carry on. Though his points are baseless, his angles and nuance is impressively calculated to deescalate any friction that the crowd had with Paul’s claims against craftsmen.[[13]](#footnote-13)

* + Second, the clerk set out to convince the crowd that, in light of his first point, the men who were pegged as part of the issue were not *real* threats to the greatness of their great stone thing which is really really great and also great.
    - **V. 37 –** “Keep calm…for you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.”
    - Pretty simply, the clerk notices that “With respect to Gaius, Aristarchus, and possibly also Alexander…no evidence had been presented that these men were guilty of sacrilege or of overt disrespect to the goddess. However, the city clerk was clearly putting the best possible construction on the matter to restrain the crowd.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Like any skilled law enforcement officer, he’s trying to deescalate the situation.
* Having made his first two points, he then tried to exert control over the crowd, directing them to civil avenues of handling this so the situation wouldn’t get worse.
  + **Vv. 38–40 –** “So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another. But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful meeting. For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no cause for which we can give as an account for this disorderly gathering.”
  + The clerk evidently knows who started this (Demetrius and his gang), but he redirects them to “the courts” and “proconsuls” (judges) if there’s a specific issue.
  + However, in v. 39, “The city clerk then indicated to Demetrius and his supporters that there might be ‘something further’...which needed to be brought up, possibly meaning ‘something more than a private lawsuit’. Any such matter ‘*must be settled in a legal assembly’*…the present meeting not being a regular, duly constituted civic assembly, able to transact such business (cf. v. 32…). In effect, ‘the town clerk simply asks Demetrius to put off the question for a few days’.”[[15]](#footnote-15)
  + The final point, given in verse 40, describes how the city is in danger of being accused of a riot. The reason? “there is no cause for which we can give as an account for this disorderly gathering.” So, ironically, the “writer of the people” can’t find the words to explain what’s happening to the Empire, at least not the words he would *want* to share. (“Sinners gonna sin” wouldn’t really do it.) It’s hard to polish this one.
  + Peterson notes, “There is a play on words in the opening part of this verse. Demetrius claimed that his business and the worship of Artemis were in danger (v. 27…) because of Paul’s teaching. The city clerk claimed that the real danger (v. 40…) was the possibility of *being charged with rioting*, based on the events of the day (…‘because of today’). Rioting in support of their religion was provocative and potentially self-destructive. We know of two occasions in the first century ad when the Roman authorities questioned practices connected with the temple of Artemis. Against that background, it is easy to see why the city clerk would not want the cult of Artemis to come again to the notice of the proconsul. As ‘the principal liaison officer between the civic administration and the Roman government of the province’, he expressed his concern that *we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it*.”[[16]](#footnote-16)
  + He also notes that “A city charged with riotous behaviour ‘could lose the respect of Roman officials, guilds which caused trouble could be disbanded, city officials could be punished, and a city could even lose its freedom.”[[17]](#footnote-17)
* **V. 41 –** And thus, after the writer of the people had delivered his words, “he dismissed the meeting” and Luke closed the curtain. We see the great “disturbance concerning the Way” (19:23) had now been broken up by God’s grace. But before that happened, we got to see a lot of the world’s power structures in operation, which teaches us a lot about the kinds of resistance that Christians can expect to face in the world.
  + Peterson summarizes, “This chapter, then, shows the potential of the gospel to transform the life and culture of a city and its surrounding region. Paul’s three-year ministry of teaching the word of the Lord in Ephesus touched people at every level of society and began to transform the religious practices and lifestyle of many. However, Luke shows the need to be realistic about the opposition that will arise when the practical effect of such change is experienced by unbelievers. The self-interest of religious, social, and economic groups may be so intense that the lives of Christians may be threatened. Spiritual opposition may manifest itself in a variety of ways, but the name of Jesus is powerful to overcome even demonic forces and to allow the gospel to prevail.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

**Day 5 – Questions**

1. How does God use the city clerk to provide a solution to the riot? What would’ve been a better solution?
2. What helps us see that the city clerk is very skilled at covering his tail?
3. What do you make of the fact that God used the selfish interests of the city clerk to prevent their society from unraveling into a riot?

1. The fact that Luke 13:11 specifies how the woman’s sickness was “caused by a spirit” indicates that not all sicknesses were caused by spirits, for otherwise he wouldn’t have needed to say anything more than “she was sick.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Specifically, this is where Luke lists Peter’s extraordinary miracles (5:15), as well as the fear that fell over everyone (believers and unbelievers) due to the judgment rendered on Ananias and Sapphira (5:11–13). But whereas the unbelieving Jews in Acts 5 dared not associate with the church and effectively backed away (5:13), here, we see Gentiles were converted and “kept coming” (key word) to the church “confessing and disclosing their practices.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Polhill, [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac26?ref=Bible.Ac19.17-18&off=277&ctx=+of+the+Lord+Jesus.+~For+some+it+taught+a), 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Schnabel, [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/exegcommacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.19&off=1505&ctx=er+drachmas)%2c+which+~amounts+to+the+yearl), 799. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Polhill, [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac26?ref=Bible.Ac19.19&off=646&ctx=reater+still%2c+since+~the+drachma+was+an+a), 406. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.21-22&off=727&ctx=acedonia+(16%3a6%E2%80%9310).+~There+is+also+an+ech), 543. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.21-22&off=1622&ctx=+visit+Rome+also%E2%80%99)%2c+~suggesting+that+ther), 543–544. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.21-22&off=416&ctx=led+by+the+Spirit%E2%80%99+(~dedemenos+en+pneumat), 543. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Schnabel, [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/exegcommacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.33&off=1631&ctx=tive+absolute).1616%0a~The+Jews+want+Alexan), 808; Marshall, [*Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/tntc65acus?ref=Bible.Ac19.33&off=592&ctx=rward+to+speak+when+~the+Jews+made+him+th), 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.33-34&off=441&ctx=1%3a20%3b+2+Tim.+4%3a14).+~Perhaps+the+Jews+int), 549; Polhill, [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac26?ref=Bible.Ac19.32-34&off=326&ctx=ress+the+crowd%3f%EF%BB%BF43%EF%BB%BF+~Very+likely+it+was+t), 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Schnabel, [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/exegcommacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.35&off=707&ctx=er+of+the+city.1622+~The+secretary+of+the), 809. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.35-36&off=162&ctx=irs+of+the+city%E2%80%99.96+~He+quieted+the+crowd), 549. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Schnabel, [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/exegcommacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.35&off=4012&ctx=Artemis+image.%E2%80%9D1638+~This+description+was), 810. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.37-38&off=6&ctx=p+of+Artemis.%0a37%E2%80%9338+~With+respect+to+Gaiu), 550. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.39&off=3&ctx=+public+meeting.%0a39+~The+city+clerk+then+), 550. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.40&off=1016&ctx=his+commotion%E2%80%99).105%0a~There+is+a+play+on+w), 551. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.40&off=2308&ctx=+and+unpleasant.108+~A+city+charged+with+), 551. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Peterson, [*The Acts of the Apostles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcacts?ref=Bible.Ac19.41&off=1091&ctx=+witness+to+Christ.%0a~This+chapter%2c+then%2c+), 552. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)