

## Acts 19:21-41 The Gospel Brings Cultural Confrontation

### I. Paul Prepares For The Next Journey (21-22)

#### A. Paul Resolves to Go To Jerusalem and Rome (21)

1. Paul feels it is time to leave the work in Ephesus and begin the journey to Rome
2. Rome is the center of the Empire. Perhaps the best place to plant the seed that will spread the gospel to the world.

#### B. Paul Sends Helpers Ahead to Prepare (22)

1. Already looking forward to the mission, Paul sends Timothy and Erastus to prepare the way
2. Paul wanted to go to Macedonia and Achaia to receive a collection for the Jerusalem church which was suffering (see 2 Co. 8; Rom. 15:25; 1 Co. 16:1 – Perhaps these ministers would organize everything

### II. A Mob Threatens The Church in Ephesus (23-34)

#### A. Silversmiths Bring Opposition to the Gospel (23-27)

##### 1. A Disturbance Begins in Ephesus (23)

##### 2. Demetrius Gathers The Silversmiths (24-25a)

###### a. Demetrius the Silversmith (23-24)

- i. There were a guild of silversmiths in Ephesus
- ii. They made tiny silver replicas of the Goddess Artemis (Diana) and Her Temple in Ephesus
- iii. The Temple was one of the 7 wonders of the Ancient world –
- iv. People bought these statues in honor of Diana, and to worship her in their own places

###### b. Demetrius Gathers the Craftsmen (25a)

##### 3. Demetrius Incites The Gathering Against the Church (25b-27)

###### a. “Paul is turning everyone away from our gods (25b-26)

- i. Demetrius’ main motivation is his money – Paul is costing them business by preaching the gospel
  - Converts are no longer buying idols
  - Witnesses are speaking truthfully about the illegitimacy of man-made idols

###### ii. Demetrius warns the silversmiths that Paul has spread his teaching throughout the Roman province of Asia

- Paul and his friend’s work have been seen and heard by all those in Ephesus
- The gospel has been spread widely
- He says Paul is persuading the people and turning them away
- Do you think Demetrius actually cares about the people’s spiritual condition or their love for the Ephesian goddess?

b. "Paul will destroy our business and Artemis' reputation (27)

- i. Demetrius says that if Paul continues, their lucrative business would be destroyed
- ii. Demetrius says that if Paul continues, Artemis' Temple would lose glory and be despised
  - The Temple was a huge attraction for Ephesus where people would come to worship and bring money to deposit in the Temple
  - The Roman historian Tacitus says that Ephesus was not given permission to build a Temple to Tiberius or Caligula because it was already distinguished by Artemis' Temple
- iii. Demetrius says that Artemis (Diana) herself would be counted as nothing
  - Artemis was Apollo's sister, the daughter of Zeus. She is the goddess of virginity, childbirth (she was many breasted), and the hunt.
  - She is often depicted with a bow
  - She was seen as protector of the city. For her devoted followers, dishonoring her would bring consequences on the city. She would punish them.
- iv. Remember that the real motivation is the money – Demetrius is using the cities pride and religion to manipulate the crowd

B. The Silversmiths Turn Into a Dangerous Mob (28-32)

1. The Craftsmen are Enraged (28)

- a. The silversmiths realize the seriousness of the situation
- b. They would lose their business in the city
- c. They would also dishonor the goddess who protected the city
- d. To show the goddess they were devoted, they shouted, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians"
  - i. This is almost like mixed up religious patriotism, used to mobilize the entire city into a mob
  - ii. Yet, the real motivation behind the start of the whole episode is money

2. The Mob Grows and Seizes Paul's Companions (29)

- a. The Silversmiths continue to shout and soon the whole city gets involved
  - i. This is probably what Demetrius and the craftsmen wanted from the beginning

- ii. They march toward the Ephesian theater which could hold 24,000 people and was the site where city meetings and where the different guilds met together.
  - b. The Mob was so enraged that they violently seized two of Paul's companions and dragged them into the theater. They were probably the focus of the mob's rage.
  - c. The city has become a complete riot because of the gospel being preached faithfully
- 3. Paul's Friends Refuse to Let Him Address the Crowd (30-31)
  - a. Paul is concerned for his companions and seeks to calm the crowd, and probably preach the gospel
  - b. First, the disciples of the church of Ephesus refused to let Paul endanger himself by entering into the theater
  - c. Then some of the Asiarchs council Paul to stay out of the crowd for safety's sake
    - i. Asiarchs were high ranking officials in the city – the title was given to the powerful men of society
    - ii. Evidently Paul had become friendly and familiar with some of the leading men of the city
    - iii. This may be evidence that the imperial policy of Rome was not hostile to Christianity per say, it was only at the accusations of the Jews that Rome got involved during these years
- 4. The Mob Descends into Total Chaos (32)
  - a. No one really knew why they were there
  - b. The Mob descended into a mob mentality and total confusion was the result
  - c. They didn't know why they were there, they just knew that they were angry and that someone had dishonored their goddess
- C. The Mob is Set Against the Church (Jews?) (33-34)
  - 1. Alexander Tries to Calm the Crowd (33)
    - a. The Jews put forward Alexander to calm the mob
    - b. The Jews in Ephesus are the ones who had disavowed Paul and spoke evil of the gospel he preached
    - c. Perhaps, they thought Alexander would make sure they knew that Paul and the Christians were not part of the Jewish community
  - 2. Alexander, Being Jewish, is Rejected by the Mob (34)
    - a. Alexander is not allowed to speak
    - b. Alexander is recognized as a Jew and the crowd begins to pridefully chant their devotion to Artemis
    - c. They chant for two whole hours without stopping
- III. The Mob is Pacified By A City Official (35-41)
  - A. The Town Clerk Calms The Mob (35-36a)

1. The Town Clerk
  - a. The Town Clerk was the highest ranking official in the city
  - b. He was not just a clerk in the modern sense
  - c. He presided over the city assemblies and the meetings, being the chief administrative officer
2. The Town Clerk Quiets Them
  - a. They immediately responded and respected his authority
  - b. They knew that this was a man they need to listen to
  - c. He was the liaison between the city officials and the Roman provincial authorities. If there was a riot or unrest, he would be held accountable
3. The Town Clerk Explains that Ephesus is Special to Artemis
  - a. He explains that Artemis is too great for preachers to harm
  - b. He says everyone knows that Ephesus is the home of the great Temple of Artemis
4. The Town Clerk Explains that Artemis' statue fell from Heaven (from Jupiter)
  - a. The Tradition of Ephesus was that the stone (i.e. the image of Artemis) had actually fallen from the sky
  - b. The town clerk appeals to these as facts to show that there is no need for the riotous mob
- B. The Town Clerk Dismisses Their Charges (36b-37)
  1. The Town Clerk Advises them to be quiet
    - a. No one can deny that Artemis is the goddess of Ephesus
    - b. Therefore, it doesn't make sense for them to fight for what is already true
    - c. He tells them to be quiet and disperse
  2. The Town Clerk Disproves the Charges Against the Church (37)
    - a. He refutes the charges that the mob has laid upon Paul's companions.
    - b. They are neither robbers of temples (the word is literally "temple robbers") nor have they spoke evil against the goddess
    - c. There is no legality in the punishment they desired for the companions of Paul
    - d. Notice that Paul had not started up a campaign picketing the Temple of Artemis, his cause was simply to preach the gospel
- C. The Town Clerk Warns The Mob (38-40)
  1. The Silversmiths must lodge their complaint legally (38)
    - a. The clerk states that if the silversmiths have a legal complaint against these preachers, the courts are open. They should go file charges

- b. He also says that if there is anything they need to have resolved, they must do it through the proper legal channels
  - 2. The Mob is in danger of being charged with rioting (39-40)
    - a. The Clerk warns them that they are in danger of being viewed a mob
    - b. In which case, the Roman garrison in the city would put it down with extreme prejudice.
    - c. They have no lawful reason for their assembly in the amphitheater, other than these silversmiths are mad about losing their money
- D. The Town Clerk Successfully Dismisses the Mob (41)
  - 1. They realize from the clerk that they are putting themselves in a very dangerous position
  - 2. They hear reason from the town clerk, disperse and go home