SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Nineteen, Verses 1–41

The Word Grew Mightily in Ephesus — twelve men who had not heard of the Spirit, a lecture hall for two years, a bonfire of magic books, and a city shouting for its goddess

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

In the capital of Asia Paul finds a dozen disciples who know only John's baptism, teaches daily for two years until the whole province hears, sees the occult broken by the name of Jesus, and survives a two-hour riot staged by silversmiths who could feel the gospel in their purses. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 19:1–41

Spirit · hall · name · books · riot

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from twelve disciples of John to a theater full of shouting

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"So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." — Acts 19:20

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 19:1–41

The Word Grew Mightily in Ephesus — the name of the Lord Jesus is magnified, the occult burns, and the idol trade riots

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 19 in 5 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 19:20

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

† Before the Passage

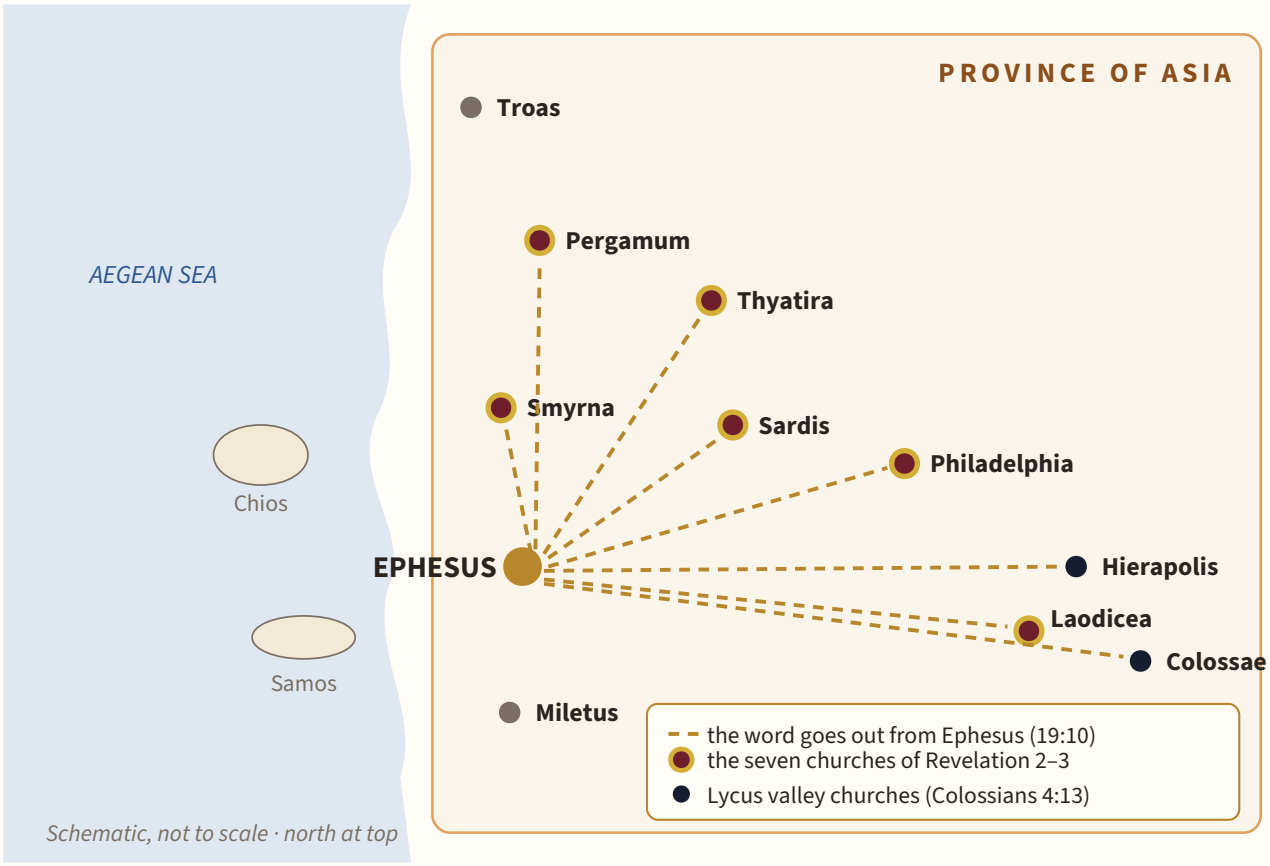
Acts 19 is the heart of Paul's third missionary journey. On the second journey he had stopped briefly in Ephesus, reasoned in the synagogue, and left with a promise: "I will return to you again if God wills" (18:21). He left Priscilla and Aquila there, and while he was away they took aside a gifted preacher named Apollos, who was "acquainted only with the baptism of John" (18:25), and "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (18:26). Apollos has now gone on to Corinth (19:1), and Paul comes back overland "through the upper country."

Ephesus was the leading city of the Roman province of Asia (western Turkey today), a port near the mouth of the Cayster river and home of one of the wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Artemis (the Diana of the KJV). Guzik describes it: "It was supported by 127 pillars, each 60 feet high, and was decorated with great sculptures." Longenecker, he notes, calls the temple a treasury and bank as well as a shrine. The city was also famous for magic. Guzik quotes Gaebelein: "Ephesus was a stronghold of Satan." Into that city Paul brings the kingdom of God.

Paul stayed here longer than anywhere else on his journeys — three months in the synagogue and two years in the hall of Tyrannus (vv. 8–10); he later reminds the elders it was "three years" in all (20:31). From Ephesus he wrote 1 Corinthians: "I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:8–9). Both halves of that sentence are Acts 19.

Watch two lines run through the chapter. One is the name of the Lord Jesus (vv. 5, 13, 17) and the word of the Lord (vv. 10, 20). The other is the cry, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (vv. 28, 34). Luke uses the same word, *ekklēsia*, for the mob in the theater (vv. 32, 39, 41) that he uses elsewhere for the church. Two assemblies meet in Ephesus; only one of them knows why it has come together (v. 32).

FIGURE · EPHESUS AND THE PROVINCE OF ASIA



From the hall of Tyrannus "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (19:10); the dashed lines show how the message could reach the cities later addressed in Revelation 2–3 and the Lycus valley.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 19:1–7

Into What Then Were You Baptized?

Twelve disciples who knew only John's baptism meet the Spirit of Jesus

> 1 *It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus,*
> *and found some disciples.* 2 *He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they*
> *said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."* 3 *And he said, "Into what then were you*
> *baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."* 4 *Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance,*
> *telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."* 5 *When they heard this, they*
> *were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* 6 *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit*
> *came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.* 7 *There were in all about twelve men.*
>
> ACTS 19:1–7

> *"Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;"*
>
> ACTS 18:24–25

> *"for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*
>
> ACTS 1:5

FIGURE · THE SPIRIT COMES IN ACTS

THE SPIRIT COMES IN ACTS · FOUR SCENES, FOUR KINDS OF PEOPLE

	JERUSALEM Acts 2:1–4	SAMARIA Acts 8:14–17	CAESAREA Acts 10:44–46	EPHESUS Acts 19:1–7
WHO	Jews gathered at Pentecost	Samaritans baptized by Philip	Gentiles in Cornelius' house	about twelve men who knew John's
HOW	suddenly, from heaven, on all	Peter and John lay on hands	"while Peter was still speaking"	baptized in Jesus' name; Paul's hands
SIGN	"other tongues" (2:4)	no sign named by Luke	"speaking with tongues" (10:46)	tongues and prophesying (19:6)

Acts 1:8 — "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth"
Each new circle receives the same Spirit, with the apostles there to witness it.

Read across: Luke shows the Spirit coming to Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles and John's disciples — the widening circles of Acts 1:8, with an apostle present each time.

ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες

ELABETE PISTEUSANTES · "DID YOU RECEIVE … WHEN YOU BELIEVED" · G2983, G4100

Paul's question pairs two aorists: *elabete*, "did you receive" (from *lambanō*), and *pisteusantes*, "having believed" (from *pisteuō*). The NASB reads the participle as simultaneous — "when you believed"; the KJV's "since ye believed" makes it sound like a later, second step. The Greek allows either, which is why the verse sits at the center of the debate over a "second blessing." Paul's next question settles what he was really asking: "Into what then were you baptized?" (v. 3). Their trouble was not a missing second experience but a missing first one — they had never heard that the Spirit had come.

μετάνοια

METANOIA · "REPENTANCE" · G3341

A change of mind that turns a man around. John's was "the baptism of repentance" (v. 4) — it got a man ready for the One coming after him. Paul does not belittle it; he completes it: John told the people "to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." Repentance points forward; faith takes hold of the One it was pointing to. Paul will sum up his whole Ephesian ministry the same way: "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (20:21).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the "disciples" Paul found in Ephesus were not yet what the word suggests. Paul's question exposed the gap, and his explanation filled it: "Paul points out that John's baptism was one of repentance, not necessarily faith unto salvation." Guzik cites Bruce on the word "disciples," and he reads the men as having a partial faith — repentance without yet resting on the Christ John pointed to. Once they were baptized in Jesus' name and Paul laid hands on them, "they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and received His gifts." He does not build a doctrine of tongues on the passage.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 2 as "Receiving the Holy Ghost" (13 July 1884). He notices that Paul did not ask whether they believed but whether they had received the Spirit, and he presses the question on believers: the Spirit's abiding work is worth more than the early church's miraculous gifts. "Prayer without the Spirit is as a bird without wings, or an arrow without a bow." We live by receiving: "we are not fountains but reservoirs, not creators but receivers." Faith is not a single past act — "it is not only our starting-point, but the road along which we are to travel." And he warns against despising weak, poorly taught believers like these twelve.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry treats the twelve gently. They were disciples who had been left short of the full truth, and Paul taught them rather than despised them: "Those that have been left in ignorance, or led into error" are to be instructed patiently. Paul's question was a fair one to put to any professing believer, for "The Holy Ghost is promised to all believers, to all petitioners." Once they heard of Christ they were baptized in His name, and the Spirit came on them with gifts of tongues and prophecy.

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 19:8–12

Two Years in the Hall of Tyrannus

The synagogue hardens, the word moves next door, and all Asia hears

8 *And he entered the synagogue and continued* ◷ *speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about* ☆ *the kingdom of God.* 9 *But when some were becoming* ⚠ *hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples,* ◷ *reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.* 10 *This took place for two years, so that* ☆ *all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.* 11 △ *God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,* 12 *so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.*

ACTS 19:8–12

"But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."

1 CORINTHIANS 16:8–9

σχολή

SCHOLĒ · "SCHOOL, LECTURE HALL" · G4981

The word first meant leisure — free time — and then the place where people with free time listened to a teacher; our word "school" comes from it. Its only New Testament use is here: "the school of Tyrannus." Paul moves from a synagogue, where he could be shouted down, to a rented hall, where he could reason "daily" for two years (vv. 9–10). Guzik mentions an ancient, uninspired tradition that Paul taught there through the hot midday hours. The result: "all who lived in Asia heard."

σκληρύνω

SKLĒRYNŌ · "HARDEN" · G4645

From *sklēros*, hard. To harden, to make stubborn. The NASB uses "hardened" here and "harden" in the warning of Hebrews 3 and 4, quoting Psalm 95: "DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS" (Hebrews 4:7). In verse 9 the hardening is something "some were becoming" — an ongoing process — and it turned into public slander: "speaking evil of the Way before the people." A heart that keeps saying no eventually starts talking against what it refused. Luke's name for the faith, "the Way" (*hodos*, G3598; vv. 9, 23), is a road people walk, not a club they join.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Paul started where he always did, in the synagogue, and stayed three months until "the influence of the Jews who rejected the message drove him out." He did not quit; he moved to a lecture hall and taught daily, and "his effective teaching equipped believers, who got the word of God out to all who dwelt in Asia." On the cloths, Guzik follows Bruce that they were probably Paul's work rags, and he says: "Luke states these were unusual miracles, and gives an example." God was meeting people where they were: "God will stoop down to meet us even in our crude superstitions."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "The Powerful Truth of God" (Acts 19:19–20, 11 Feb 1872) Spurgeon begins with how the word was planted. Paul started with a dozen prepared hearers, met hardness and slander, and kept sowing: "It was his to scatter the seed; it was God's business to make it fall in the right place." The worker is not to measure his success by the crop: "He that sows is responsible for the sowing, not for the reaping." Spurgeon presses his hearers to try new places and small meetings in homes, because the gospel has not changed: "The gospel of Jesus Christ was not intended for one century or two, but for all time."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry shows Paul reasoning, not just announcing: "He preached argumentatively: he disputed." When some hardened and spoke evil of the way, he separated the disciples and "disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus," so that both Jews and Greeks across Asia could hear. On the special miracles Henry is careful to give God the glory: "It was not Paul that wrought them"; "He was but the instrument, God was the principal agent." The cloths had no power of their own; the power was God's, confirming the word.

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 19:13–20

Jesus I Know, and Paul I Know

The sons of Sceva, a bonfire of magic books, and a word that prevails

13 *But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."* 14 *Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.* 15 *And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"* 16 *And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.* 17 *This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.* 18 *Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.* 19 *And 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.*

ACTS 19:13–20

"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you."

DEUTERONOMY 18:10–12

ἐξορκιστής

EXORKISTĒS · "EXORCIST" · G1845

One who drives out spirits by an oath or spell; its only New Testament use is verse 13. The related verb *horkizō* (G3726) is what they said: "I adjure you" — I put you under oath — "by Jesus whom Paul preaches." They used Jesus' name as one more word of power from a borrowed formula. Verse 15 answers with two different verbs (NASB "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul"), and the question every religious man has to answer: "but who are you?" A name you do not belong to will not protect you.

περίεργα

PERIERGA · "MAGIC" · G4021

Literally things "worked around" — curious, meddling arts; the KJV has "curious arts." Paul uses the same adjective in 1 Timothy 5:13 for "busybodies." In Ephesus it meant the famous scrolls of spells and charms. Guzik: "It was thought that the power of these magic spells was in their secrecy, which was renounced in the telling." The believers did not sell the books; they burned them, and the price — fifty thousand pieces of silver — was counted out loud (v. 19).

ηὔξανεν καὶ ἴσχυεν

ĒUXANEN KAI ISCHYEN · "WAS GROWING AND PREVAILING" · G837, G2480

Two imperfect verbs — continuing action. *Auxanō* is to grow, as a plant grows; *ischyō* is to be strong, to win out. Luke uses the growth summary at turning points in Acts (6:7; 12:24); here he adds "mightily" (literally "by might") and "prevailing." The same verb *ischyō* just appeared in verse 16: the demon "overpowered" the sons of Sceva. The demon prevailed over men who used the name falsely; the word of the Lord prevailed over the whole city.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik puts the failure plainly: "The Jewish exorcists failed because they had no personal relationship with Jesus." The spirit knew the real thing when it saw it: "Apparently, evil spirits know who their enemies are (in this case, Jesus and Paul)." When word spread, fear fell on Ephesus and the name of Jesus was magnified, and believers began confessing their practices. Quoting Gaebelein, "Ephesus was a stronghold of Satan," and the burned books were worth a fortune — their value, he says, "has been estimated at anywhere between $1 million and $5 million." Confession broke the spells' power, which lay in secrecy.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's sermon "Paul at Ephesus" (Acts 19:1–20, 23 Jan 2005) is summarized on Ligonier's page (there is no transcript): Ephesus was absorbed in magic and the occult, and some tried to imitate the Spirit's power for their own gain. The lesson of the sons of Sceva is that "attempting to manipulate the power of God will be met with disastrous consequences." Christ is not a technique: "Jesus is not a force to be controlled but a Savior whom we must receive and to whom we must submit."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's third point in "The Powerful Truth of God" is that the word prevailed over sin. Paul did not rail at Diana; he preached Christ, and the gospel "finds out the particular sin of that place, and it is quite sure to expose it." In Ephesus that sin was magic, and once the sons of Sceva were routed, converts confessed and burned their books at great cost. Spurgeon will not settle for less: "I have no faith in any reformation that does not come through men's hearts being changed." He applies it to his own day — whatever dishonors God must go, even at a loss — for "The devil buys souls in the gross, and can pay for them in coppers."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads verse 15 as a testimony squeezed out of hell: "This was extorted out of the mouth of the evil spirit by the power of God, to gain honour to the gospel." The name of Jesus is no charm, but faith in Him is a real defense: "If we resist the devil by a true and lively faith in Christ, he will flee from us." In the confessions and the bonfire he sees true repentance — "Those that truly repent of sin will keep themselves as far as possible from the occasions of it." Confessing was not enough for them; "they did not think this enough unless they burnt their books."

IV
MOVEMENT

ACTS 19:21–34

Great Is Artemis of the Ephesians!

Paul plans for Rome while Demetrius rallies the silversmiths and fills the theater

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 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. 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!"

ACTS 19:21–34

"To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him? As for the idol, a craftsman
casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver. He who is too impoverished
for such an offering Selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman To prepare an idol
that will not totter."

ISAIAH 40:18–20

FIGURE · TWO ASSEMBLIES IN EPHESUS

TWO ASSEMBLIES IN ONE CITY · BOTH CALLED ἐκκλησία

THE DISCIPLES (vv8–20)	THE THEATER (vv23–41)
gathered by the word of the Lord (v10)	gathered by a silversmith's speech (v25)
reasoning daily, two years (vv9–10)	shouting for about two hours (v34)
"the name of the Lord Jesus" magnified (v17)	"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (vv28, 34)
burn their own costly books (v19)	fear for their prosperity (vv25–27)
know whom they have believed (v18)	most "did not know" why they came (v32)
the word keeps growing (v20)	the assembly is dismissed (v41)

Luke calls the mob an ekklēsia in vv32, 39 and 41 — the word the New Testament uses for the church.

Compare the two gatherings line by line: one grows around the word and the name of Jesus, the other shouts for an idol and goes home.

ναοὺς ἀργυροῦς Ἀρτέμιδος

NAOUS … ARTEMIDOS · "SHRINES OF ARTEMIS" · G3485, G735

Naos is the word for a temple's inner house where the god was thought to dwell; Demetrius made silver miniatures of it for pilgrims and households (v. 24 — the NASB's only "shrines" for *naos*). Artemis of Ephesus was not the slim huntress of Greek art but a mother-goddess of fertility, and her temple was the city's pride. Paul's message — "gods made with hands are no gods at all" (v. 26) — went straight at the trade. Guzik quotes Spurgeon: "I wish the gospel would affect the trade of London; I wish it might."

ἐκκλησία

EKKLĒSIA · "ASSEMBLY" · G1577

The ordinary Greek word for a called-out assembly of citizens, and the word the New Testament uses for the church. Luke uses it three times of the crowd in the theater: "the assembly was in confusion" (v. 32), "the lawful assembly" (v. 39), "he dismissed the assembly" (v. 41). The theater's assembly is loud, confused and mostly ignorant of why it has gathered; the Lord's assembly is gathered by the word and the name. Two hours of shouting changed nothing in Ephesus; two years of teaching changed a province.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes Paul's plan in verse 21 and his passion for Rome — "reflects Paul's passion to visit and serve the Christian community that was already there" — and that "A significant part of the work of Timothy and Erastus was simply to help Paul." Then the trouble: Demetrius' trade was suffering. Guzik describes the great temple — "It was lost to history until it was discovered in 1869, and its main altar was unearthed in 1965" — and quotes Hughes: "The epicenter of Artemis worship was a black meteorite." In the theater, "For two hours they shouted"; Alexander was pushed forward because "Alexander wanted to make sure that the mob knew that the Jews did not approve of Paul either."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's sermon "Riot at Ephesus" (Acts 19:21–41) is also known only by its Ligonier description, which states his starting point: "As fallen sinners, we are predisposed to idolatry." "Every people group in every time in every place has had its own idols." He takes his hearers back to Ephesus to see what happens when the gospel is preached faithfully and boldly in a culture full of idols, and the page puts his question to us: "What is the church's responsibility in our modern culture?"

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon lists the riot as evidence that the word had grown. A strong church had formed; men of standing had become Paul's friends — it was they who kept him out of the theater (v. 31); even fraudulent exorcists knew Jesus' name; and the gospel had cut into the silver trade so deeply that Demetrius raised a mob. The growth was the Spirit's, but He used workers: "Where God works, he works with men that work." And again: "God won't save the world without men; he will use instruments until Christ comes."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees Paul as "a man of vast designs for God," already planning Rome, for "The good people at Rome were the glory of the city which he longed for a sight of." Demetrius, he says, is honest about his motive: "It is natural for men to be jealous for that, whether right or wrong, by which they get their wealth." Paul's message was simply true — "Those are no gods which are made with hands." The crowd had no argument, only volume: "Thus the most sacred truths are often run down with nothing else but noise and clamour and popular fury." And Paul's friends judged rightly: "It would better become Paul to venture into a synagogue than into a theatre."

V
MOVEMENT

ACTS 19:35–41

Do Nothing Rash

A town clerk quiets the theater and the law protects the gospel

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.*

ACTS 19:35–41

νεωκόρος

NEŌKOROS · "GUARDIAN OF THE TEMPLE" · G3511

Literally a "temple-sweeper," then the official keeper of a temple — an honorary title Ephesus wore with pride. Its only New Testament use is verse 35, where the clerk reminds the crowd that the whole world knows Ephesus is *neōkoros* of Artemis and of "the image which fell down from heaven" (*diopetēs*, G1356, "fallen from the sky"; Hughes, quoted by Guzik, connects Artemis worship to a meteorite). His logic: if everyone knows it, why shout? The city boasted of guarding an image that fell from the sky; the gospel Paul preached was about the One who came down from heaven.

γραμματεύς

GRAMMATEUS · "TOWN CLERK" · G1122

In the Gospels this is the word for the "scribes." In a Greek city it was the chief civic officer who drafted decrees and answered to Rome for public order. His worry in verse 40 is Roman: "we are in danger of being accused of a riot" (*stasis*, G4714, insurrection) over a "disorderly gathering" (*systrophē*, G4963). The courts were open, the proconsuls available; the gospel had broken no law.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the clerk calmed the crowd by reason and law: the men were not temple robbers or blasphemers, the courts were in session, and Rome would ask questions about a riot. He draws Luke's purpose from it: "Luke wanted to show that rational people saw nothing to fear or oppose in Christianity." He quotes Williams on the theater's acoustics — "The acoustics of the theater are excellent even today and at that time were even better" — and Pierson on what revival does to a city: "when disciples have a true revival, society gets a revolution."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry admires the clerk as a prudent magistrate whom God used to shield His servants. His counsel is good for any heated crowd: "You ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly." Henry notes what finally quieted the people — not the truth about Diana but fear of Rome: "Most people stand in awe of men's judgment more than of the judgment of God." God used an unbeliever's good sense to end the uproar and protect His servants.

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From Sinai's command to John's last word to the churches of Asia

"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth."

EXODUS 20:3–4

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."

ACTS 2:4

> *"For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit."*
>
> ACTS 8:16-17

> *"For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 8:5-6

> *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;"*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-9

> *"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,"*
>
> EPHESIANS 1:13

> *"Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;"*
>
> EPHESIANS 5:11

> *"Little children, guard yourselves from idols."*
>
> 1 JOHN 5:21

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry's summary of the riot fits the whole Bible's quarrel with idols: "Those are no gods which are made with hands." And the men who profit from idols are jealous for that "by which they get their wealth."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and fills in Ephesus — the temple, the magic, the theater; Sproul (known here only through Ligonier's summaries of two sermons) warns against manipulating God and names our idols; Spurgeon preaches the word that grows and prevails and the Spirit we must keep receiving; Henry draws counsel from every verse. They differ on the twelve men — Guzik sees partial faith short of salvation, Henry sees untaught disciples — and agree that the name of Jesus is not a charm but a Lord.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · John's disciples	John's baptism was repentance, not yet saving faith; then filled and gifted.	— (no Sproul text on these verses sourced here)	Not fountains but reservoirs; faith is the road, not just the start.	Teach the untaught patiently; the Spirit is promised to all believers.
II · The hall	Driven out of the synagogue, he equipped believers who reached all Asia.	— (no Sproul text on these verses sourced here)	Scatter the seed; God decides where it falls.	He preached argumentatively; God, not Paul, wrought the miracles.
III · The name	No personal relationship with Jesus — no power over demons.	Manipulating God's power ends in disaster; Jesus is Savior, not force.	The gospel finds a city's particular sin and exposes it.	True repentance cuts off the occasions of sin — burn the books.
IV · The riot	The great temple, the shrine trade, two hours of shouting.	We are predisposed to idolatry; every people has its idols.	The riot proved the growth: God works with men that work.	Men are jealous for what makes them money; noise is no argument.
V · The clerk	Rational people saw nothing to fear in Christianity.	— (no Sproul text on these verses sourced here)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Do nothing rashly; most fear men's judgment more than God's.

ACTS 19:1–41 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The question was about the first blessing, not a second.** "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" is followed at once by "Into what then were you baptized?" (vv2–3). They had never heard the Spirit had come; Paul gives them Jesus, and the Spirit comes with Him. THE TEXT
- **We are reservoirs, not fountains.** Spurgeon: "we are not fountains but reservoirs, not creators but receivers." The Christian life is lived by continually receiving. SPURGEON
- **The Spirit's coming widens like Acts 1:8.** Jews (2:4), Samaritans (8:17), Gentiles (10:44–46), and now John's disciples in Asia (19:6) — each group receives the same Spirit, with an apostle present. THE TEXT
- **When the door closes, rent a hall.** Hardened hearers drove Paul from the synagogue; daily teaching in a lecture hall reached a whole province in two years (vv9–10). Guzik: he "equipped believers." GUZIK
- **God gets the glory for the cloths.** Henry: "He was but the instrument, God was the principal agent." Guzik: "God will stoop down to meet us even in our crude superstitions." HENRY
- **A borrowed name will not save you.** "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" (v15). Guzik: they "had no personal relationship with Jesus." Sproul: "Jesus is not a force to be controlled." SPROUL

- **Secrets lose their power when spoken.** Believers came "confessing and disclosing their practices" (v18). Guzik: the spells' power "was in their secrecy, which was renounced in the telling." GUZIK
- **Real repentance burns the books.** Henry: "Those that truly repent of sin will keep themselves as far as possible from the occasions of it." Fifty thousand pieces of silver went up in smoke (v19). HENRY
- **The word grows like a living thing.** *Auxanō* and *ischyō* (v20): growing and prevailing — the same verb used when the demon "overpowered" the false exorcists (v16). THE GREEK
- **The gospel touches the economy.** Demetrius: "our prosperity depends upon this business" (v25). Spurgeon (quoted by Guzik): "I wish the gospel would affect the trade of London." THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

1 **The twelve men had a real start — repentance — but did not yet know Jesus or His Spirit. Where might my faith be sincere but incomplete?**

Into what then were you baptized?

19:1–7; 18:24–26

2 **Paul left the synagogue when hearts hardened and found another door. When a door closes in my ministry or my family, do I quit or look for the next hall?**

A wide door … and many adversaries.

19:8–10; 1 Cor 16:8–9

3 **The sons of Sceva used Jesus' name without knowing Him. In what ways do I use Christian words or habits as a charm instead of trusting a Person?**

Jesus is not a force to be controlled (Sproul).

19:13–17

4 **What are my "magic books" — the things I keep in secret, or keep around "just in case," that I need to confess and burn?**

True repentance cuts off the occasions of sin (Henry).

19:18–19; Deut 18:10–12

5 **Demetrius said, "our prosperity depends upon this business." Where would obeying Jesus cost me money, and what am I doing about it?**

Men are jealous for what gives them their wealth (Henry).

19:24–27; Matt 6:24

6 **The crowd shouted for two hours and most did not know why they had come. What crowd or cause do I get swept into without thinking?**

Noise and clamour and popular fury (Henry).

19:28–34

Acts 19 shows what happens when the word of the Lord is taught patiently in a dark city: the Spirit comes, the occult is exposed, idols lose customers, and the name of Jesus is magnified. The question the demon asked is still the question: not whether I know about Jesus, but whether I belong to Him — and whether my own books are burned.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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