

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## *The Gospel Confronts Satan, Pt 1*

### **Acts 19:11-20**

**Keywords:** Missions, 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey, Gospel, Gospel, Demons

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** none

**SermonAudio Blurb:** Paul is now in the beginning stages of his third missionary journey and finds himself in the city of Ephesus. Here we see him come face-to-face with the forces of Satan as the gospel is preached, people believe and there is a demonic push back. In all of this, we see the attempts to mimic the power of Christ in the gospel by those who are not believers. We see the material cost to repenting from false practices and we see how the gospel creates tension and hatred from those who refuse to bow in faith to Jesus Christ.

#### **I. Introduction.**

A. Read 19:11-20.

B. Background:

1. We are at the very beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey for the Apostle Paul.
2. The initial parts of that journey are described in short order in 18:22-23.
  - a. He returned to the home church in Antioch. Here he would report back with all that had taken place. This would be a time of rest, planning and preparation.
  - b. From there he would have traveled the main road up through Asia. We see that the purpose at this point was not to evangelize. Instead, it was to go strengthen the believers and churches that all came into being through his previous efforts.
  - c. Once Paul was through Syria and Galatia he sets his eyes on the city of Ephesus.
  - d. You can see from the map that after Ephesus he travels over to Europe and again revisits the churches he established in his second journey.
  - e. So, basically, Paul's third journey is built around strengthening what already exists and sandwiched between Asia and European church is the key city of Ephesus, where he will invest three years of his life.

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- C. The clash of two realms.
  - 1. We have a picture given in the bible of how there are two realms that are in consistent tension with one another. The Kingdom of God and Satan's kingdom.
  - 2. One is true and one is a usurper and fraud.
  - 3. All the way back in the beginning we have this set before us in the Garden.
  - 4. You can then trace this thread all the way through the bible.
    - a. Over and over you will see the clash.
    - b. We see it with Moses and the gods of Egypt.
    - c. Moses and the gods of Israel in the wilderness.
    - d. Elijah and the priests of Baal.
    - e. The prophets of Israel and Judah against the gods of the nations.
  - 5. The New Testament brought this tension into even greater focus with the coming of Jesus Christ.
    - a. The effort to have Jesus killed as a child by King Herod.
    - b. The effort to silence John the Baptist through execution.
    - c. And then Jesus enters onto the center stage and the battle rages much more publically. He is tempted by Satan. And then for three years we see Him easily cast out any and all demons who possessed people.
  - 6. Now, here in Ephesus we find this battle once again occurring.

## **II. A brief history of Ephesus.**

- A. Corinth was the strategic city for the 2nd journey. Ephesus becomes the strategic city for the 3rd journey.
- B. In 16:6 we know that Paul tried to go further into Asia and was prevented by God. It is probable that Ephesus was the city he was trying to get to.
- C. But instead he was moved by the Spirit to go into Europe instead and settle into Corinth first, thus opening up Europe to the spread of the gospel.
- D. Now in this 3rd journey, Ephesus becomes open to him.
- E. This city was the richest and most populated province of the Roman Empire. It was strategic to the Roman empire due to its location, its industry and resources.

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- F. It used to have a port that is no longer in existence as a result of sediment from the river building up over the centuries.
- G. Population is estimated at between 250,000 to 400,000.
- H. Ephesus had a unique blending of influences and similarities to Athens and Corinth, which makes it possible that God first caused Paul to go to Athens and Corinth to expose him to ideas and practices that he would encounter on an even greater scale in Ephesus.
- I. Like Corinth, sexual immorality was the norm. No one gave a thought about the reality and practice of prostitution and it was thoroughly integrated into various religious practices.
- J. Because of its trade and resources, Ephesus was a melting pot of different cultures and their religious ideas.
  - 1. Just like Corinth, the Egyptian god, Serapis, was widely worshiped. You may remember he was the god of merchant sailors.
  - 2. But the centerpiece of Ephesus was the famous temple of Artemis/Diana/Astarte/Ishtar.
    - a. This temple was one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient world.
    - b. "It was 425 feet long by 220 feet wide by 60 feet high. There were 127 pillars, each of them the gift of a king. They were all of glittering Parian marble and 36 of them were marvelously gilt and inlaid. The great altar had been carved by the greatest of all Greek sculptors.
  - 3. Artemis.
    - a. The image of Artemis was not beautiful.
    - b. The Artemis worshiped here is not the same as the more common Artemis of Greece who is portrayed as a beautiful huntress.
    - c. This Artemis She was the goddess of fertility and depicted in statues with many breasts.
    - d. Worship involved regular sacrifices of animals. The altar was so large that it could hold hundreds of animals at a time. The meat of these sacrifices was then shared among those who worshiped there.
    - e. People would travel here to offer money, jewels and other goods seeking safe childbirth, prosperity and fertility.

# M i s s i o     D e i     F e l l o w s h i p

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4. Because of the importance of this temple and all the practices associated with it, there was a very brisk trade in religious artifacts and trinkets.
- K. Here is the key point of all of this. Ephesus was a place of great demonic activity.
  1. Demon possession was not a strange or unique event there.
  2. False religion and beliefs abounded.
- L. Paul comes to this city and we find God working through Paul to not merely triumph over demonic powers but do it in an over the top manner.
  1. Acts 19:11-20 is making one basic point: in a city dominated by demonic activities of every sort, God's power was seen in how Paul was able to easily, almost casually, heal and cast out demons.
  2. It is important to notice how the focus is NOT on Paul but on God, who then is identified as Jesus that is doing these works.
  3. The result was that the gospel (called the "Word of the Lord.") was making major inroads in a very dark city.
  4. Today I want to help you be reminded that there is a whole other side of life and existence that we often forget.
- M. Today I want to focus more upon the broader reality of demonic/Satanic activity that occurs in our world around us.
  1. How often do you consider the presence of something other than what you can experience through your normal senses?
  2. In the American culture, for so long, there has been a sense of a scientific, mechanistic approach to reality that we tend to default to thinking about things through the lens of some sort of science.
  3. Whereas, people coming from many other parts of the world might see events differently, seeing a spiritual force of some type at work.
  4. A few decades ago Francis Schaeffer gave a wonderful illustration of reality from a biblical perspective:

Essentially the universe is just a room and nothing else. Two men in the room, one a materialist and one a Christian. Years of examining everything in the room was done by the materialist. In the end he presents the Christian with man books he has written on the subject. The Christian then points out that it is incomplete.

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Here is what Schaeffer writes, "Finally the Christian turns to the materialist and says, "Well, this is a tremendous work. You have really told me a great deal about my universe that I wouldn't otherwise have known. However, my friend, this is all very fine, but it's drastically incomplete."

And you can imagine this man, who has spent his lifetime pouring out his heart to do his measuring and his weighing, suddenly taken aback. He turns and says to the Christian, "Well, now, I'm shocked that you tell me it's not all here. What have I missed?" And then the Christian responds something like this: "I have a book here, the Bible, and it tells me things that you do not know. It tells me the origin of the universe. Your scientific investigation by its very nature cannot do that. And it also says nothing about where you and I as men came from. You have examined us because we, like the paint on the wall, are phenomena in the universe. You've studied something of our psychology and even given me several volumes on it, but you have not told me how we came to be here. In short, you don't know the origin of either the universe or us."

"Furthermore," the Christian continues, "I know from this book that there is more to the universe than you have described. There is an unseen portion as well as a seen portion. And there is a cause-and-effect relationship between them. They are not mutually exclusive, but are parts of one reality. It's as if you had taken an orange, sliced it in half, and only concerned yourself with one of the halves. To understand reality in our universe properly, you have to consider both halves – both the seen and the unseen."

In this sense "supernatural" is not a good word to describe the unseen portion. We must understand that the unseen portion of the universe is just as natural and as real as is the seen portion. Furthermore, the seen and the unseen are not totally separated. When we do certain things, it makes a difference in the unseen world and things in the unseen world make a difference in the seen world." (Death in the City, 141-2)

5. And this is what we must always remember.
6. Here in Ephesus, though, we come face-to-face with it and it deserves our attention.
7. The more we ignore this reality the greater we descend into a mechanistic, purposeless and powerless form of Christianity.
  - a. As Christians, the great events of the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, the works of miracles, the Substitutionary Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Ascension all become just information rather than framework of our very hope.
  - b. The virgin birth cuts out human effort from the equation. Jesus is fully human, but the bible also makes it clear that He is fully God as well. But God brings life into the womb of Mary apart from any

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man. So He is man, but without the stain of sin, that every other human carries.

- c. The incarnation is the literally God taking on the flesh of humanity.
  - (1) We see this in John 1:1-3 with vs 14.
  - (2) But there is more. John 1:4-5 speaks of how the coming of Jesus pierced the darkness.
  - (3) This world, this age is described as being the kingdom of Satan and he is the god of this age.
- d. The substitutionary atonement is a key part of the hope any person who trusts in Jesus for salvation from God's wrath and forgiveness of sin.
  - (1) Simply put, it is God in human flesh, Jesus, who dies as a substitute for sinners.
  - (2) The reality is that all humans are sinners. We do not conform to the will of God and we rebel against God Himself. We do this by nature because sin is what dominates us.
  - (3) How might we be accepted by God? That is the question we must ask and it is the question we tend to ignore or play down. The answer is perfection.
  - (4) But 2 Corinthians 5:21 is one of many passages that tell us what Jesus Christ did on our behalf.
  - (5) In the death of Christ we have the triumph of Jesus over Satan as described in Colossians 2:13-15.
- e. The resurrection is similar to the death of Jesus Christ.
  - (1) In the first book of the New Testament, James, there is the question of from where temptation comes. And in 1:13ff we find that it comes not from outside of us but within.
  - (2) Romans 5:12 is the most straightforward description of the cause of death (explain).

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- f. And in the ascension to heaven we have the glorious promise that He will return to finish this destruction of these spiritual forces arrayed against us.

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. So when we see how some people are healed by touching an apron worn by Paul or we hear about demons being cast out of people, do not miss the point.
- B. God sent this man into a very dark place. His only weapon was the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - 1. He did not go in power.
  - 2. He did not go in great wisdom and cleverness.
  - 3. He did not go with an army.
  - 4. He came with a message that the Roman emperor was not lord, rather, Jesus Christ was Lord.
  - 5. He came with a message that called people to turn from their own ways and paths and hopes and turn in faith to only Jesus.
  - 6. It seemed to be a message of weakness, and yet in it the power of God was made known. Lives were changed, sins were forgiven and the darkness was pierced through.
- C. And for you and I, that reality is our as well. We go forward armed only with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Benediction**

**May our God cause you all to not stumble and to make you stand one day in His presence filled with joy. May God's Spirit hold you in His mighty hand until that day of redemption. And may you find your hope, joy and life in His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. To Him be the glory and majesty and dominion for all time. Amen**