

Acts of the Apostles

Week 23 – Acts 19:1-22

Paul and John's Disciples (19:1-7)

- Paul travelled from Antioch to Ephesus (a 1,000+ mile journey) fulfilling his promise to return if the Lord willed (see Acts 18:21).
- Paul spent two years in Ephesus training the church there.
- In Ephesus, Paul encountered some disciples of John.
 - o They are called believers, but it is unclear exactly what it is that they believe (v 2).
 - Some scholars think they are believers in Christ, while others, like Witherington, argue that they are only disciples of John.
 - It is clear for Luke that the mark of a Christian is the reception of the Holy Spirit (see Luke 3:15-16; 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 2:16-36; 11:15-16; 13:25).
 - This could be a difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - o Paul asked them specifically about reception of the Holy Spirit.
 - o They acknowledged ignorance of the Holy Spirit and then it was discovered that they had only received John's baptism.
 - o Paul clarified what it means to believe in and be baptized in the name of Jesus – which involves not only repentance (John's baptism) but also the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord.
 - o These disciples of John believed, were baptized in the name of Jesus, and after Paul placed his hands on them, received the Holy Spirit.
 - o In a repeat of Pentecost, these new believers spoke in tongues and begin prophesying.

Paul's Ministry in Ephesus (19:8-11)

- Paul's ministry in Ephesus followed his previous pattern of preaching in the synagogue until doing so became impractical because of opposition from some of the Jews (vv 8-9).
- In Ephesus the harsh words are aimed not only at Paul but at all the followers of "the Way," an early descriptor of Christianity (v 9).
- Paul moved his ministry to the lecture Hall of Tyrannus and taught there for two years (vv 9-10).
- Paul's teaching ministry was accompanied by many miracles, including healings that occurred when people touched handkerchiefs that had touched Paul (v 11).

The Seven Sons of Sceva (19:12-20)

- The text notes that some Jews, including the "Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest" were attempting to cast out evil spirits in "the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches" (v 14).
- We do not know if they were having any success with the formula or not.

- On one occasion, it did not work. An evil spirit answered them that it knew Jesus and knew about Paul but didn't know them. It then severely beat them and sent them running out of the house naked.
- This story helps squelch any idea that the power of the gospel is a form of magic.
- The people of Ephesus respond to the news of this event with revival.
 - o People held the name of Jesus in high esteem.
 - o Believers, who apparently were still dabbling in sorcery, confessed their sins and burned their expensive sorcery scrolls publicly.
- As a result, the gospel continued to spread (v 20).

Paul Returns to Jerusalem (19:21-22)

- At some point, Paul decided to go back to Jerusalem via Macedonia and Achaia (Corinth) (v 21).
- This is the first point at which he voices a desire to go to Rome (v 21).
- He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, on to Macedonia, while he stayed in Asia a bit longer (v 21).

Sources

Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

David E. Garland, *Acts*, Teaching the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids MI: BakerBooks, 2017).

I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity, 1980).