

Paul in Ephesus



Ice-Breaker

What experiences have you had with religious counterfeits (relics, forgeries, hoaxes, cults and the like)? Any that have really scared you?



Scripture Passage

Acts 19:1-22

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ²and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when ^ayou believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

⁴Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized into ^bthe name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues ^cand prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.

⁸Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

¹¹God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

¹³Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵[One day] the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

¹⁷When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. ¹⁸Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. ¹⁹A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ^d ²⁰In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

²¹After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." ²²He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

a [2] Or after

b [5] Or in

c [6] Or other languages

d [19] A drachma was a silver coin worth about a day's wages.



Bible Study

1. Why do you think Paul went to Ephesus on his next trip (see 18:19-21)?
2. Apollos was from Egypt (18:24-25), and these disciples were about 800 miles from Jerusalem. What does the fact that they were followers of John the Baptist tell you about the extent of his influence? How would their awareness of John be good preparation for them to hear the Gospel (see John 1:19-34)?
3. Since Paul had to teach these people about Jesus (v. 4), they apparently had not heard about him or the Holy Spirit (v. 2). From 2:38; 10:43-44 and this passage, what do you learn about the relationship between faith in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit?
4. What seems to be the signal throughout Acts for Paul to stop teaching in the synagogues? Why do you think this is so? What do these "stop and go" signals teach you about ministry in general?
5. Compare verses 8-9 with 13-15: How do these two groups of Jews view Jesus differently? If you were one of Sceva's sons, what would you say about Jesus after being jumped by this evil spirit (v. 16)?
6. From the reaction of the crowd in verses 17-19, how would you describe the general response to Jesus prior to verses 13-16? Why would those events change people's ideas so much?



Reference Notes

19:1 After Apollos had gone to Corinth, Paul arrived in Ephesus where he met about a dozen men who, like Apollos, had a partial understanding of the Gospel. While what was especially lacking is not told, it appears this group knew more about John than they did Jesus (v. 4), and were unaware that the time of the fulfillment of what John had anticipated had arrived.

19:2 *Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?* As Paul talked with these men, something must have seemed out of place for him to ask this question. ***we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.*** Since John the Baptist spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16), it is likely that the intent of their response is more that they were not aware that the Holy Spirit had been given. Or perhaps they had responded to some other teaching of John's and his words about the Spirit passed right over them.

19:3 *John's baptism.* John baptized people for repentance symbolizing their being cleansed from sin in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. Jesus' baptism is a symbol of the pouring out of the Spirit in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises regarding the time of the Messiah.

19:4 *a baptism of repentance.* See Mark 1:4. John's baptism symbolized the cleansing away of sin. It may have been based on the baptism of the Essene sect at Qumran, a desert community where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Or it may have been a refinement of Jewish baptism of Gentile converts, who were baptized to symbolize their turning away from their sinful ways. John taught that Jews also needed such repentance and cleansing from sin. The baptism which Jesus taught also involved repentance. But by itself a baptism of repentance only focuses on the past, and finding forgiveness for it. Christian baptism also includes the gift of the Spirit which empowers for the future. The fact that Paul had to tell them about Jesus implies these men were more disciples of John than they were of Jesus. Upon hearing the news of Jesus, they responded with faith and were baptized in his name (v. 5). There is no record of others who were baptized by John needing to be

rebaptized in the name of Jesus, but perhaps some of the listeners at Pentecost likewise experienced both baptisms.

19:6 placed his hands on them. The last time this action was mentioned was when the Gospel broke through into Samaria (see Acts 8:17). As there, the laying on of hands and the manifestation of tongues may be meant as an assurance that these people were now fully included in the church and that Ephesus was to be a major new thrust for the church's mission. The laying on of hands was considered to be a way that the Holy Spirit was conveyed to people, especially preachers and teachers (see 2 Timothy 1:6).

19:8-20 Ephesus became the hub of Paul's ministry for two years, during which time churches were founded in Colosse, Laodicea and the other cities mentioned in Revelation 1:11. It was also here that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. Paul's ministry first took place in the synagogue until he was forced out (vv. 8-9; see also Acts 18:6). After that he lectured daily at a school owned by a man named Tyrannus. One Greek text says Paul taught from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; a time when workers would take a rest from the heat of the day and when classes would not normally be held by the school's master.

19:11 extraordinary miracles. See the similar miracles wrought by Peter in Acts 5:15-16. Ephesus was a city renowned for its magic arts. Some scrolls of magic spells from there can be found today in museum collections. For that reason, this type of evidence was necessary to convince people that the power of the Gospel was greater than that of magic.

19:12 handkerchiefs. A rather polite way of translating "sweat rags," pieces of cloth that Paul wrapped around his head to keep sweat out of his eyes as he worked in his trade as a leather-worker. aprons. The type of apron a tradesman would use to protect his clothes.

19:13 Some Jews. These were not orthodox Jews by any means! They had blended their Judaism with pagan magical arts and gained a reputation as exorcists who could invoke the secret name of the Most High God over the power of evil; undoubtedly for a price. To them, exorcism was a matter of magical incantations in which the names of higher spiritual authorities would be chanted until the "right" name for a particular case worked in driving out a demon. They were not disciples of Jesus, but simply adding his name to their bag of tricks as a magical form to use in exorcism.

19:14 Sceva, a Jewish chief priest. There was never a high priest in Jerusalem by that name, although he may have been a member of the high priest's family. He was probably an unusually successful exorcist who assumed the title for himself to command more respect (and business) from people in the area.

19:15-16 That the name of Jesus was not to be understood as simply another magical form was made abundantly clear in this incident!

19:17-20 This event made a deep impression upon the public. It showed that Jesus was a unique power to be reckoned with, superior to the demons as shown by the exorcisms performed by Paul (v. 12), but not one that could be "controlled" by exorcists who merely used his name. It was in this way that Jesus broke through the thought forms of the people in Ephesus to draw them to himself. He was honored as Lord over all powers. Undoubtedly it was this incident, combined with the ongoing teaching Paul provided about the kingdom of God (v. 8), that led many people to abandon their magic arts in order to affirm their loyalty to Jesus.

19:18 those who believed. The tense of the word implies that these were Christians who still secretly practiced magic arts. The incident with Sceva's sons showed them they needed to lay aside

these practices once for all.

19:19 *fifty thousand drachmas*. An incredible amount when one considers that a drachma was worth a day's wage!

19:21 *I must visit Rome also*. Paul intended to visit Rome and then go on to Spain after delivering the offering to Jerusalem (Romans 1:11; 15:23-26). The letter to the Romans was written from Corinth after Paul left Ephesus and just prior to his trip to Jerusalem. Paul will finally come to Rome in the end of Acts, but as a prisoner.

Caring Time

1. How do people try to use Jesus for their own purposes today? What is the difference between that and real faith in Christ?
2. What do you need to "burn" in order to live for God? What will it cost you?