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God's Power Displayed in Ephesus
Acts 19: 1-22

54-56 AD

God's power displayed in Ephesus DIG: Since Paul had to teach these people about Yeshua, they apparently had not heard about him or the Ruach Ha'Kodesh. From Acts 2:38 and 10:43-44, as well as this section, what do you learn about the relationship between faith in Yeshua and receiving the Ruach? What seems to be the signal throughout Acts for Paul to stop teaching in the synagogue? Why? What do these "stop and go" signals teach you about ministry in general? From the reaction of the crowd, how would you describe the general response to Yeshua prior to verses 13-16? Why would those events change people's ideas?

REFLECT: How do people today try to use Yeshua for their own purposes? What is the difference between that and real faith in Messiah? What did you have to change in your lifestyle when you first began to follow Yeshua? Are there still some things you're reluctant to do away with in order to be really honest with God? What would it cost you to do away with them? How has God personalized His revelation of Himself to you? Think of an example when He met you at a particular point of need, showing His complete knowledge of both you and your situation. What are some things this tells you about Him?

God was doing extraordinary miracles by Paul's hands.

After the interlude describing **Apollo's** conversion and ministry, **Luke** returns to the story of **Paul** for **his** final example of transition. **While Apollos was at Corinth** (**to see the link click Ae – The Founding of the Church of Ephesus**)**, Paul traveled through the upper region and came to Ephesus (Acts 18:27-28). The upper region** is a term used for the highlands of **the Ephesian** area. This meant that **Paul** didn't travel on the usual Roman road, but took the more direct route through **Colossae** and **Laodicea (Colossians 2:1)**. And **he** came to

Ephesus in fulfillment of **his** promise in **Acts 18:21**. **He found some disciples and said to them, "Did you receive the Ruach Ha'Kodesh when you believed?" Paul** recognized **them** as believers of some sort. But there was something obviously lacking in **their** faith. **They replied to him, "No, we've never even heard that there is a Ruach Ha'Kodesh (Acts 19:1-2).**

As soon as **Paul** heard **their** response, **he** began to probe. Then **he asked, "Into what were you immersed?" They said, "Into John's** back to **God immersion" (Acts 19:3).** Like **Apollos**, these were **disciples of John-the-Immerser**, and had been **immersed** as **Apollos** had been. But **Apollos** was with **John** long enough to know that **Yeshua** was **the Messiah**. **He** was with **John** when **he** declared: **Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). These disciples of John,** however, had left the Land beforehand and never even heard of **Yeshua**. In other words, **they** had even less knowledge about **the Gospel** than **Apollos**. But **they** were remnants of the righteous of the TaNaKh, still hanging on, still looking for **their Messiah** twenty years after **John-the-Immerser** had died.

After **Paul** recognized who those **men** were, **he** spoke about **Yeshua Messiah**, not **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. **He** said: **John immersed with an immersion of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the One coming after him – that is, in Yeshua (Acts 19:4).** Because **they** had identified with **John's back-to-God movement**, they were also committing **themselves** to accepting whomever **John** pointed out as **the Messiah**. But then **Paul** taught **them** concerning **the One John** identified – **Yeshua Messiah**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for the wonderful gift of the **Ruach Ha'Kodesh for all** believe in Yeshua as their Messiah. **However, you are not in the flesh but in the Ruach – if indeed the Ruach-Elohim dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Ruach of Messiah, he does not belong to Him (Romans 8:9).***

*Thank you that **Your** great gift of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** lives in me helping, guiding and declaring to me what **Messiah** has said. **But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on His own; but whatever He hears, He will tell you. And He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is Mine. For this reason I said the Ruach will take from what is Mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-15).** Thank **You** for **Your** abiding **Presence** in me and that*

You** can always be counted on to be there when I need **You**. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5c).

*What a comfort it is that **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** never is too busy, nor falls asleep. **He** is always right there with me, ready for action, and works in the most loving way for me. Even in David's great trial of being sought after by King Saul, David did not give up hope but he focused his attention on **God's steadfast love** for him and he praised **God**. David knew **God's** love for him was real, even in the midst of a trail. **Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. For you have been my help . . . and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy (Psalms 63:3, 7).** Thank **You** for the abiding **Presence** of **your Ruach Ha'Kodesh in** me. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

When they heard the Gospel, they were immersed in the name of the Lord Yeshua. They had been **immersed** in **John's immersion**, but **they** had not **immersed themselves** in believer's **immersion** in the name of **the Lord Yeshua**. **They** served as a mini-Shavu'ot for this pocket of **Jewish believers** who had not yet heard that **Yeshua, the Messiah**, had come. **When Paul,** an **apostle, laid hands upon them, the Ruach Ha'Kodesh came upon them. And** the evidence that **they** had received true **Spirit immersion** was that **they began speaking in** different **languages** (nowhere does the Bible teach that the gift of **tongues** is anything other than known human **languages**)[15] **and prophesying,** receiving direct revelation from **God. In all, there were about twelve men (Acts 19:5-7).** The historical situation makes this a unique experience during the transitional period of **Acts**.

As we proceed through the book of **Acts** we will be comparing the way salvation comes to **the Jews**, **the Samaritans** and **the Gentiles**, showing, as was the case with the way **Yeshua** healed, there is no set order. **Acts is a transitional book and a historical book, and you can't establish doctrine based upon history. You base doctrine on clear theological statements. The historical facts can illustrate the doctrine but they cannot develop doctrine on their own.**

The development of the opposition to **the Gospel** within **the synagogue** was relatively slow in coming – it took **three months**. But when it did come it grew strong enough to cause **Paul** to strategically withdraw to **Tyrannus' yeshivah**. The Hebrew word ***yeshivah*** comes from the word that means *sit* and it signifies *a place for learning Torah*. The Greek word *schole*, which gives us the English word *school,*

means lecture hall. No English word really comes close to the real meaning of ***yeshivah***, but the Yiddish word *shul*, or *school*, comes the closest.[16]



This section gives a brief summary of Paul's long period of ministry in Ephesus, covering both his testimony to Messiah (19:8-10) and the miracles accomplished through him (Acts 19:11-12). Paul went into the synagogue for three months and continued to **speak boldly, debating and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when they were hardening and refusing to believe, speaking evil of the Way (Acts 9:2, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14-22) before the whole group, Paul withdrew from the synagogue, taking his** new **Jewish believers with him**. Thus, the church at **Ephesus** was planted. **They** moved to the public lecture hall (Greek: *schole,* meaning *a school*) of **Tyrannus**, who was probably a **God-fearing** Gentile (see the commentary on **Acts Bb – An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53**). There, **Paul** set up a ***yeshivah*** in **Tyrannus'** *school* and **continued teaching them daily. He** evangelized all who would listen **for two years, so that all the residents of Asia** Minor **heard the word of the Lord – Jewish as well as Greek people (Acts 19:8-10).** Yet later when addressing the elders of **Ephesus** in **20:31, Paul** comments that **he** ministered to **them** for **three years**. But there is no real discrepancy between the two accounts. **Paul** arrived in **Ephesus** in the spring of 53 AD and remained there until the spring of 56 AD, a period of **three years**. The **two years** mentioned here refers to the period of **his** teaching in ***the yeshivah*** in the home of **Tyrannus**.[17]

Therefore, without ever leaving **Ephesus**, **Paul**, through **his** converts, evangelized the entire province of **Asia** Minor. During that time the churches of Colossae, Hierapolis, and probably also the seven churches of **Revelation 2-3** were founded, and **First** and **Second Corinthians** were written. **Paul's** very effective strategy for

evangelism was to teach the Word . . . make **disciples** . . . and then let **them** spread **the Gospel**.[18]

It is important for modern Messianic Judaism to have available the concept of a **Messianic *yeshiva***. Restoring the Jewishness of **the Gospel** should involve presenting it in a Jewish religious, cultural and social environment. While today the word ***yeshivah***, to most Jewish people, means a school for Jewish studies, particularly Torah, Talmud, halakhah, and so on, it is right for Messianic Judaism to adopt this term and apply it to Messianic Jewish institutions of learning that relate to Jewish and New Covenant materials. This is the way to meet the challenge of **Matthew 13:52: Therefore, every Torah-teacher who has been instructed about the kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.**



To provide undeniable evidence that the message was true, **God was doing extraordinary miracles by Paul's hands (Acts 19:11).** Such miraculous confirmation was a standard feature of the preaching of the apostles. In the absence of a written B'rit Chadashah by which to measure someone's teaching, **God** used signs and wonders to authenticate **His** message and authority as an apostle **(Second Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 2:22)**. One goal of **Acts** is to show that in every way **Paul**, the apostle to the Gentiles, had a ministry equal to that of **Peter**, the leading apostle to **the Jews**. These **extraordinary miracles** compare to **Peter's** healing **miracles** in **Acts 5:15-16**. That shows that these powers were limited to the apostles. There are no examples in the book of **Acts** where regular believers are able to do these types of miracles. In fact, **Paul himself** did not even possess those powers **(Second Corinthians 12:8; Philippians 2:27; First Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20)**.[19]

Paul healed like **Yeshua** healed – with a word or a touch, he healed organic

diseases from birth, he healed instantly and completely, and he raised the dead. Strangely those who claim the gift of healing today rarely, if ever, come out of their television studios. They always seem to exercise their "gift" only in a controlled environment, staged their way, and run according to their schedule. Why don't we hear of the gift of healing being used in hospital hallways? Why aren't more healers using their gift on the streets in India or Bangladesh? Why aren't they in the leper colonies and AIDS hospices where masses of people are racked with disease? Why? Because those who claim the gift of healing do not really have it.[20]

Steeped in superstition and failing to understand that **Paul** was merely the human channel for **God's** power, **the Ephesians** did some amazing things. The **handkerchiefs,** or sweatbands, **and aprons Paul** wore during **his** tent making labor **were carried from his body to the sick.** The idea that healing power could be so magically transmitted was prevalent in the ancient world **(Matthew 9:21; Acts 5:15)**. The fact that **the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them** through those means does not commend the method (as some today would have us believe). It must be viewed as nothing more than **God's** accommodation to the mentality of those people at that time. And further proved that **Paul** was from **ADONAI** and thus spoke for **Him (Acts 19:12).** As a doctor, **Luke** carefully distinguishes between **diseases** and afflictions caused by **evil spirits** to make clear that not all illness comes from demonic causes. The miracles **YHVH** performed through **Paul** were essential to convince **the Ephesians** that **he** was from **God**. Impressed with **him** as the messenger of **Ha'Shem, their** hearts were prepared to hear **his** message of salvation.[21]

The example of Paul's miracle-working is followed by two episodes that involve false attempts to accomplish the miraculous. The first relates the unsuccessful attempt by a group of Jewish exorcists to use the name of Yeshua in their practice (Acts 19:13-16). The second shows the triumph of the Gospel over magic and the occult (Acts 19:17-19). There were imposters who went around making a living by various kinds of pseudo-scientific or clairvoyant powers, including the practice of **exorcism**. **They** were ready to call on the names of any and every god or divinity in **their** chants – and often **they** recited long lists of the names so as to be sure of including the right god in any particular case. Even pagans used the various names of **God**.[22] These **Jewish exorcists (Luke 11:19)** now proceeded to use **the name** of **Yeshua** in an effort to match **Paul's** powers. **But some traveling Jewish exorcists also tried to invoke the name Yeshua,** by using the formula: **I charge you by the Yeshua whom Paul preaches.** Unlike

Paul, **they** did not know **the Person they** named nor have **His** power delegated to **them**. **Seven sons of a Jewish ruling kohen named Sceva were doing this. Sceva** was a Latin name. **He** was a **Jew** but had perverted **Judaism** in **Ephesus** because any acting **high priest** would be ministering in the Temple, not **Ephesus**.[23] Like **Simon** (see **Acts Ba – Simon the Sorcerer**), **he** was power hungry. **But** the attempted formula failed. **The evil spirit answered them, "I** recognize **Yeshua and I** am acquainted with **Paul, but you, who are you** to give **me** this order**" (Acts 19:13-15)?**



The result may be described as the comic relief in an otherwise serious narrative. **The evil spirit** realized that those phony **exorcists** had no real power or authority, so **they** turned the tables on **them**, driving *them* out! **Then the man** who was controlled by **the evil spirit sprang at them, subduing and overpowering all seven of them, so that they fled out of that house naked and traumatized.** This **became known** among **both Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus**, and the effect among superstitious **people** was to cause both **fear and the name of the Lord Yeshua to be magnified.** As a result, **many also of those who had believed** kept coming one after another **confessing and recounting their practices.** So even some believers had been caught up in the occult practices of **Sceva** and **his sons**. It took time for the Church to purify the concept of **God** from **their** pagan ways of thinking. In fact, this is still true today. We still have the tendency to let our ideas of **God** be influenced by contemporary thinking.[24]

The demonstration of the futility of pagan attempts to master evil spirits led **many of those who practiced magic arts to bring their books together in a heap** (**Ephesus** was the great center of sorcery in the time of **Paul**) **and burn them** completely **before everyone. The books** mentioned were probably made up of

directions for producing magical results and were of great value to all who practiced sorcery. **They totaled the value of the books and found it to be about fifty thousand pieces of silver,** or the equivalent to **fifty thousand** days' wages for an average laborer **(19:16-19).** The destruction of these books was one of the best investments believers have ever made. Not only did they publicly give up their pagan ways, but the demonic contents of those **books** went up in flames, never to poison the minds of anyone again.[25]

This is a transition statement that provides reasonable clues to the development of Luke's material that follows, the Gospel is declared in Europe (but with a return to Ephesus). So the word of the Lord kept on growing in power and prevailing (19:20). On this high note **Luke** ends the account of **Paul's** successful ministry in **Ephesus**, although the story of what happened there is not yet complete (see **Ag – Idol-Makers Start a Riot in Ephesus**).

Now after the three years of ministry in **Ephesus, Paul resolved in the Ruach to go to Jerusalem after passing through Macedonia and Achaia.** Many in the Messianic community in **Yerushalayim** were poor and in need of financial assistance. To meet that need, **Paul** wanted to take **to Tziyon** a collection from the largely Gentile churches that **he** had founded. So before returning **to Jerusalem**, **he** revisited **Macedonia and Achaia** to collect that offering **(Romans 15:25-27; First Corinthians 16:1-4; Second Corinthians 8-9)**. By contributing to the financial needs of **the Jewish** believers at **Jerusalem**, those Gentile believers would emphasize the unity of the Church **(First Corinthians 12:26)**.

But **the City of David** was not **Paul's** ultimate goal, saying: **After I have been there, I must also see Rome (19:21). This is a major turning point in the narrative of Acts. From here on, Rome becomes the major focal point.** In keeping with **his** desire **to proclaim the Good News not where Messiah was already named, lest I build on another man's foundation (Romans 15:20b), he** had not yet visited the imperial capital. **Rome** was so strategic, **he** could not stay away indefinitely. As **he** explained to the believers there: **I long to see you, so I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you (Romans 1:11). Paul's** brief mention of **his** desire to visit **Rome** marks a turning point in **Acts**. From this point on until the end of the book, the target in **his** mind was Rome. **He** would eventually get there, although not by the means **he** envisioned.[26]

So after sending Timothy and Erastus ahead of **him** so that the collection

could be gathered before **he** arrived in **Jerusalem, Paul himself stayed in Asia for a while (19:22). Paul** delayed all **his** travel plans temporarily because as **he** wrote at this time to **the Corinthians, "But I will stay on at Ephesus until Shavu'ot, for a great door has opened wide for me, though many are in opposition (First Corinthians 16:8-9).** Those **opposing Paul** would soon make **themselves** known in the next file, as a riot erupted in **Ephesus** over the success of **Paul's** ministry.

*I receive **Paul's** prayer for **the Ephesians** as my own today, asking that **You** give me a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of **You**. I pray that the eyes of my heart may be enlightened so I may know what is the hope of **Your** calling, what are the glorious riches of **Your** inheritance among the believers everywhere, and what is the immeasurable greatness of **Your** power to us who believe, according to the working of **Your** vast strength. **You** demonstrated this power in **Messiah** by raising **Him** from the dead and seating **Him** at **Your** right hand in the heavens – far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age, but also in the age to come **(Ephesians 1:17-21)**.*