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God’s Power Displayed in Ephesus 19: 1-22

54-56 AD

God’s power displayed in Ephesus DIG: From 18:19-21, why do you think Paul headed right to Ephesus on his next trip? Apollos was from Egypt (18:24), and these disciples were about 800 miles from Jerusalem. What does the fact that they were both followers of John the Immerser tell you about the extent of his influence? How would their awareness of John be good preparation for them to hear the gospel (John 1:19-34)? Since Paul had to teach these people about Jesus, they apparently had not heard about him or the Ruach ha-Kodesh. From 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? Compare verses 8-9 with 13-15. How do these two groups of Jews view Messiah differently? 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?

REFLECT: How do people today try to use Jesus for their own purposes? What is the difference between that and real faith in Christ? What did you have to change in your lifestyle when you first begin 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 both of you and your situation. What are some things this tells you about Him?

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 link click Cf – Priscilla and Aquila Teach Apollos**)**, Paul traveled through the upper region and came to Ephesus (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 **Colosse** and **Laodicea (Colossians 2:1)**. And **he** came to **Ephesus** in fulfillment of **his** promise in **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 (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" (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 **Jesus**. 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 **Jesus Christ**, 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 (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 – **Jesus Christ**.

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. **And when Paul,** an **emissary, 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 human **languages**)[452] **and prophesying,** receiving direct revelation from **God. In all, there were about twelve men (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 gift of **languages (tongues)** can be seen four times in the book, **Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10** and **Acts 19**. There is not set order leading up to immersion by **the Spirit** and subsequent **speaking in tongues**. Here in **Acts 2** with salvation coming to **the Jews**, the order was first repentance, then water immersion, and then receiving **Spirit** immersion by **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** as evidenced by **speaking in languages**. In **Acts 8** with salvation coming to **the Samaritans**, the order was this, first **they** believed, then came water immersion, then **the emissaries** arrived, next **they** laid **their** hands on **the Samaritans**, and then **they** received **Spirit** immersion by **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** as evidenced by **the speaking in languages**. Again, you don't build doctrine on history. Keep this order in mind and we will see how it was different with **the Samaritans, the Gentiles** and **John's disciples**. Here in **Acts 10** with salvation coming to **the Gentiles**, the order was first belief in **Yeshua** as **the Messiah**, then spirit immersion by **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** as evidenced by **the speaking in** different **languages**, and finally, water immersion**.** Here in **Acts 19** with the salvation of **the disciples of John**, the order was first belief, then they were immersed again into the immersion of **Messiah**, then **Paul** laid **his** hands on **them**, and then came spirit immersion by

the Ruach ha-Kodesh as evidenced by **the speaking in** human **languages**. So there was no pattern in all four instances. Remember, you go to the Epistles for theology, you don't build doctrine on Church history like the book of **Acts**.

To understand the differences in the four appearances of languages in **Acts**, we will ask six questions as we come to each passage. **However, the one key common element in all four cases is that languages (tongues) are for the purpose of authentication.**

1. Who received it? **Jews** who were **disciples of John the Immerser**.

2. What were they? **They** were **disciples** of **John the Immerser** who had not heard that **the Messiah** of whom **John** had spoken about had already come. **They** were members of a distinct **Jewish** group within the **Jewish** world.

3. What were the circumstances? **Paul** came to **Ephesus** and when **he** found **them, he** recognized that **they** were believers of some sort but **they** had a limited knowledge of the gospel. Therefore, **Paul** told them about **Yeshua** and presented the gospel. **They** believed, received **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** by **the laying on of hands** by **Paul**. As a result, **they spoke in languages and prophesied.**

4. What was the means? Faith in **the Person** of **Jesus Christ**, the immersion into believers' immersion, then the laying on of hands by **the emissary Paul**.

5. What was the purpose in this context? Authentification. **The disciples** of **John** were in a similar danger as **the Samaritans,** that of starting a rival **John-the-Immerser** Church. This was a real threat as there are groups in the Middle East to this day that consider **John-the-Immerser** as their prophet. The fact that **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** did not come upon **them** until after believers' **immersion** authenticated that believers' **immersion** was now the accepted **immersion** and no longer **John's immersion**. And the fact that **Spirit immersion** came by **the laying on of hands** by **Paul** the **emissary** authenticated two things. First, it authenticated the message of **Paul** about **Messiah**. And secondly, it authenticated that fact that one didn't need both **John's immersion** and believers' **immersion** since **Paul** was not among those who were **immersed** by **John**.

6. What were the results? **The disciples** of **John the Immerser** became believers in the messiahship of **Yeshua,** were **immersed** as **His disciples**, and the schism was avoided.[453]

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.[454]

This section gives a brief summary of Paul's long period of ministry in Ephesus, covering both his testimony to Christ (19:8-10) and the miracles accomplished through him (19:11-12). Paul went into the synagogue and 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 (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 **Bb – An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53**). There, **Paul** set up a ***yeshivah*** in **Tyrannus'** *school* and **continued teaching them daily. He** evangelizing 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 (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**.[455]

Therefore, without ever leaving **Ephesus**, **Paul**, through **his** converts evangelized the entire province of **Asia** Minor. During that time the churches of Colosse, 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.[456]

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 (19:11).** Such miraculous confirmation was a standard feature of the preaching of the emissaries. 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 emissary **(Second Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 2:22)**. One goal of **Acts** is to show that in every way **Paul**, the emissary to the Gentiles, had a ministry equal to that of **Peter**, the leading emissary to **the Jews**. These **extraordinary miracles** compare to **Peter's** healing **miracles** in **5:15-16**. That shows that these powers were limited to the emissaries. 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; Second Timothy 4:20)**.[457]

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.[458]

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 if further proved that **Paul** was from **ADONAI** and thus spoke for **Him (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.[459]

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 Jesus in their practice (19:13-16). The second shows the triumph of the gospel over magic and the occult (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**.[460] 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 of the Lord Yeshua,** by using the formula: **I charge you by the Yeshua whom Paul preaches.** Unlike **Paul**, however, **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 in **Jerusalem**, not **Ephesus**.[461] Like **Simon** (see **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**" (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.[462]

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.[463]

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 **Ch – 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.[464]

So after sending Timothy and Erastus on 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)**.*[465]