

This is the last week we'll spend in Ephesus, and the last time we'll really see Paul as a missionary. And what an ending! Before I read, I want to show you two very important buildings in Ephesus that show up in this section:

- The first is the theater. This theater seats about 25,000 people. The citizens of Ephesus would meet here throughout the year to vote on matters and laws concerning the city.
- The second building is the temple. Ephesus was famous for magic, but was even more famous for the temple of the Goddess Artemis. Here's an artist's drawing. It was huge. It had 127 columns, each one 60 feet high. Thousands of people came every year from all over the Roman Empire to worship the Goddess Artemis. And while they were there, they'd often buy little silver and clay candle holders and goddess statues that they would take back home with them. So this Goddess and her temple were very important to the Ephesians. They were very proud of the temple—believed that their city had been given a responsibility to preserve her honor, and they made a lot of money doing it.

Acts 19:23-41

23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.

- Quick note: Christianity's original name was "The Way."

24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. 25 These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 26 And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.

- What are they? Idols: false gods.

27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

1. Demetrius is very worried and upset. Why?
2. Because people weren't buying as many silver statues to worship Artemis as they used to. Why?
3. Because they were being persuaded that the Goddess Artemis was a fake. Why?
4. Because Paul was preaching the gospel of Jesus—which included the teaching that "gods made with hands are not gods."

The Holy Spirit was moving throughout Ephesus and Asia, bringing men and women throughout the whole region to the true worship of the living God through faith in Jesus Christ. Demetrius and the other craftsmen realized it, and were freaking out. They were worried that they were about to lose a whole bunch of money—and that, "the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing."

The idol they worshipped—the idol whose temple brought honor to Ephesus was under attack by this man named Paul and his message about Jesus Christ. And if she fell, they would fall with her.

When someone attacks your "idols," they're attacking you.

An idol found in almost every house in the suburbs, is the house itself. It becomes a shrine that we worship and defend. Anything that threatens the value of our home is quickly and rapidly opposed. And conversely, anything that promises to raise the value of our homes is often praised. So a hospital is opposed—not because we don't need hospitals—but because it threatens home values. And a new high school is welcome—partially because we needed one, and partially because it increases home values.

In Ephesus, their great idol, her great temple, and their great wealth was all being attacked. So what did they do? They protested. They started to riot!

28 When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”
29 So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s companions in travel. 30 But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. 31 And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.

32 Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

- They chanted over and over for two hours. How do you think Demetrius felt? Probably awesome, powerful, justified.
- They loved Artemis, and her temple, and their money. And because they were proud of the fact that people from all over the world came to *their* city to worship *their* Goddess.
- **What do Americans boast about?** Our great country, our great wealth, our great freedoms, our great military, our great scholars, our great artists, our great athletes. Be careful, friends. Be careful. Americans do excel at many things, but remember this—when it comes to worship—only God is great.

How can I say that? How do I know God is great? Because a great God does great things.

- Deuteronomy 10:14 **“Behold, to the LORD your God **belong** heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.”**
- Deuteronomy 10:17-18 **“For the LORD your God is **God of gods** and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes **justice** for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”**
- Deuteronomy 10:21-22, **“He is your **praise**. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.”**
- 1 John 3:1, **“See what great **love** the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**

After two hours, the town officials realized they better do something.

35 And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.

38 If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” 41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

How does the town clerk quiet the mob down?

- By telling that they have nothing to worry about! “Artemis is obviously great,” he says, “and we’re obviously a great city because we have her temple”—and “these things cannot be denied”—so everyone relax.
- He also warns them that if they do something rash—like hurt or kill Gaius or Aristarchus, they’ll get in trouble.

Who was right: Demetrius or the Town Clerk?

Demetrius may have left the theater that afternoon feeling better—he had rallied the city to his side—but the fact is: he was right, and the clerk was completely wrong. Demetrius was the “canary in the coal mine.” The “early indicator” that the Holy Spirit was bringing salvation to Asia was as obvious as the unsold silver figurines filling up his shop.

The town clerk asked, **“Who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis?”** Back then, everyone knew it. Today? No one knows or cares. Because Artemis isn’t great. She never was great. She was just an idol made by human hands. Isn’t it amazing how we can deceive ourselves into worshipping all the wrong things?

That temple is gone. Artemis is gone. In their place, God is building a new temple out of all the followers of the Way who fill this planet. That what Paul wrote to the Ephesians a couple years later:

“... but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

So, we today are part of the temple that spans the globe—which is filled by the true Holy Spirit—where real worship is done, in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit. And when you leave here today to take part in the great struggle against our great adversary, leave here with boldness and courage, because your God is Great—he has done great things, and greater things are still yet to come for all of those who trust in Him.