

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 1ST–2ND // BOOK OF ACTS

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT? (ACTS 19:1–7) THE INTERIOR REGIONS AND EPHEBUS

At the time of Paul's visit, the city of Ephesus had begun to fade as a center of commerce and was known more for worship of Artemis, goddess of fertility.

- The temple of Artemis was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens, stood 400 by 200 feet, and took 220 years to build.
- Ephesus was a very wealthy and pagan place.

DISCIPLES IN EPHEBUS (V. 1)

The text doesn't really tell us whose disciples they were; Bible scholars disagree on whether they were disciples of John or Jesus.

- Apparently, they were familiar with the ministry of John the Baptist (v. 3b) but not familiar with the gospel and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul seems to be inquiring about their spiritual state when asking them about the Holy Spirit.

"WE HAVEN'T EVEN HEARD THAT THERE IS A HOLY SPIRIT."

- The NT is exceptionally clear that if someone is without the Spirit, then they are not a Christian (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3).
- Some might see these "disciples" as nominal, uneducated Christians, but they were probably not-yet-saved disciples of John who did not yet understand the gospel.
- God had more for them than what they had.

KNOWING ABOUT VS. KNOWING PERSONALLY

Some of us have reduced the Christian faith to whatever we know and understand now, and we're quite comfortable with never knowing or experiencing anything more.

- These 12 disciples had a version of the "faith," but they had never personally experienced real saving faith in Jesus and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

These disciples had only been baptized into "John's baptism," which Paul explains was a baptism of repentance and not one of faith in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 3–4).

- On hearing this, all 12 were baptized. Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit (vs. 5–7).
- As a result, they began to manifest miraculous signs of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Some have seen this passage as a pattern or formula for how the Holy Spirit comes into a Believer's life.

- The problem with this view is that in Acts 10, the Spirit came before baptism, and in Acts 8 and 16, those who were baptized didn't speak in tongues or prophesy after they were baptized.
- This "baptism of the Holy Spirit" formula starts to break down just by reading the book of Acts.

We are to constantly seek fresh, new fillings and indwellings of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), but we are "baptized in" the Holy Spirit when we repent, believe, and confess faith in Christ.

- The point of the passage isn't that we must have a separate experience with the Holy Spirit after salvation that follows a set formula and involves speaking in tongues.
- The point of the passage is so much more...

FAMILIARITY VS. SURRENDER

The passage is asking: Have you fully responded to Jesus? Are you continuing to surrender to all that He wants to do in your life through the Holy Spirit?

- Have you "inherited" a version of Christianity, or have you personally trusted Jesus?
- Are you still teachable and surrendered? If God shows you more, are you willing to follow?

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The disciples in Ephesus didn't know the Holy Spirit because they'd never truly been converted—this is why many "Christians-by-name-only" today don't know the Holy Spirit either.

- Other Christians know a great deal *about* the Holy Spirit, all while actively quenching and resisting His work in specific areas of their life.
- Are you *surrendered* to the Holy Spirit?

EXTRAORDINARY MIRACLES (ACTS 19:8–12)

After leading the disciples of John to Jesus, Paul entered the synagogue in Ephesus and was able to teach there regularly for three months without running into trouble (v. 8).

- Eventually, opposition did arise, but it didn't take the form of physical persecution.
- It was just stubbornness in a refusal to believe.
- Not only that, but some of the Jews from the synagogue "slander[ed] the Way."

SLANDERING "THE WAY"

To "slander" is to speak misrepresentations and falsehoods about a certain person or group.

- There are many who slander Christians, the Church, and the Christian faith.
- Often, this "slander" is a just a giant smoke screen—the truth is that "the Way" requires repentance, humility, and change, and the easiest way to deflect attention away from this is to slander.

Rather than continuing to speak to people who continually refused to change and constantly criticized, Paul left the synagogue.

- As he left, he took with him the Jewish Christians and set up shop in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (v. 9).
- This lecture hall was most likely a school building or public space owned by a teacher that could be rented out for events.

Some texts indicate that Paul taught in this place daily between 11 am and 4 pm for two years.

- We're not exactly sure how this arrangement worked, but some speculate that Paul worked as a tentmaker in the early mornings to make rent money for the hall, then taught later in the day from 11 am to 4 pm
- At any rate, Paul worked hard, and God rewarded his labor.

"BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS HEARD THE WORD OF THE LORD" (V. 10).

Not only was the Word faithfully preached, but the Holy Spirit showed up in a mighty way and "extraordinary miracles" were performed by God "by Paul's hands" (v. 11).

- V. 12 tells us that God used inanimate, intermediary objects to carry power from Paul to the sick.

This resulted not only in healing but in the casting out of evil spirits (v. 12).

- God was beginning to display signs and wonders to an unbelieving, pagan people.
- Don't miss the main point though: miracles NEVER formed the point of this ministry—they only served as a means to the end of proclaiming faith in Christ. We worship the God of miracles, not the miracles of God.

PAUL'S MINISTRY IS A BLEND OF SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Truth without Spirit is correct doctrine, sound sermons, and biblical programs...but very little expectation of God's active presence in our midst (informed but not transformed).

- Spirit without truth is spiritual excitement, emotional experiences, claims of God's power...but very little biblical truth (confusion and instability).
- We're called to worship in Spirit and in Truth!

THE SONS OF SCEVA (ACTS 19:13–20) EPHEBUS WAS A VERY PAGAN PLACE.

The cult of Artemis was so widespread and popular that it was the main source of income for many Ephesians.

- Artemis was the most worshiped deity in Asia, and her promises of fertility, long life, sexual fulfillment, and protection during pregnancy and childbirth, and the sexuality of her worship, brought in worshippers from around the world.

We know as Christians that Satan is a master of deception, and he and his servants disguise themselves (2 Corinthians 11:14) and allure people into having "spiritual encounters" with false gods that are really just encounters with the demonic.

- It's no surprise or wonder that demonic possession was rampant across the city of Ephesus.
- Some "itinerant Jewish exorcists" saw Paul's success and thought they would cash in.

Whether they were all brothers and their dad was an actual Jewish high priest is up for debate.

- Most likely, they were simply attempting to mix elements of Hebrew mysticism with the name "Jesus" for financial gain.
- Their tactic was interesting to say the least.
- To use the name of God, or to declare something in His name, without possessing the character behind it is the same as profaning it.

"JESUS I KNOW...PAUL I KNOW...BUT WHO ARE YOU?"

The word "know" that the demon uses for Jesus is different than the word for Paul.

- The demon had "heard about" Paul. Paul was a serious threat to all the demons in that area.
- But Jesus? The demon said he "knew" (*"had experience with"*) Jesus. The demons are intimately acquainted with who Jesus is (James 2:19).

But the seven sons had absolutely no authority and were no threat at all to these demons.

- So, the demon in the man overpowered all seven of these counterfeit "exorcists," beating them out of the house naked and bleeding!
- This incident brought fear on Jews and Gentiles alike. People began thinking twice before using the name of Jesus inappropriately or dabbling with the occult and "magic."

V. 19 tells us that Christians who had still been practicing pagan worship came forward to confess their practices, and they brought their books and pagan trinkets and burned them in public.

- So many pagan scrolls and magic materials were burned that the total value of what was destroyed was 137 years' worth of salary.
- After that, the word of the Lord prevailed mightily.

EPISTOMAI: TO KNOW BY RECOGNITION

- This kind of knowledge is not half the battle.
- The disciples of John "knew" about Jesus, the seven sons of Sceva "knew" about the Jesus of Paul, and even the demons "knew" about Paul.
- This type of knowledge can inform, but it has no power or authority to transform a life, change a heart, or conquer evil.

GINOSKO: TO KNOW BY FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE

- After they were baptized into the name of Jesus, the disciples of John "knew" the power of God, the demons already "knew" who Jesus was, and the people of Ephesus "knew" the reality of spiritual warfare.
- This type of knowledge is absolutely life-changing, transformative, authoritative, and powerful.

"RECOGNIZING" CHRIST MEANS...

- You have a basic understanding of His teachings and work on the cross.
- You admire Him and His power.
- You invoke His name to get what you may want from time to time.
- You may even be convinced that you are a disciple.
- But the truth is, you *don't really know Him*.

IF "KNOWING" CHRIST IS LIFE-CHANGING, TRANSFORMATIVE, AUTHORITATIVE, AND POWERFUL...

- How are you different after having known Christ?
- How are you changing to look more like Christ?
- Do you have victory over sin in your life?
- Are you seeing prayers answered? Miracles happen? Satan lose?
- Who knows more about Jesus because of your life? Do you know the Holy Spirit?

IS IT ALL IN YOUR HEAD, OR IS IT IN YOUR HEART?

- You are more than a brain on legs—you are a living person with a soul, spirit, and heart.
- Have you personally trusted and surrendered to Jesus, or have you just been content with a faith you inherited from others around you?
- Are you still teachable? If God showed you more of Himself through His Word and Spirit, are you still willing to follow Him wherever He leads?
- Are you surrendered to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? Or are you stubbornly resisting His work?
- Is there a sin He is asking you to confess, a relationship you need to repair, a ministry He is calling you into, or a fear, offense, or hurt He is asking you to surrender?
- *Do you want more of God?*