

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 2ND, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

THE POWER & PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (ACTS 19:1-7) PAUL RETURNS TO EPHESUS

Paul left Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila in Ephesus until he returned as promised (Acts 18:21).

- Synagogues were the center of Jewish worship, but the center of worship in Ephesus was the temple of Diana (Artemis), the goddess of fertility. The temple was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens, and it was one of the seven wonders of the world.

AN INCOMPLETE UNDERSTANDING

When Paul **"found some disciples,"** he asked a question we do not see a pattern of him asking others. There was something that prompted him to ask, **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"**

- They followed the teachings of Jesus but had not submitted to the work of Jesus on the cross.

"WE HAVEN'T EVEN HEARD THAT THERE IS A HS"

Their response shows that they were students of John, but **they did not know what Jesus had done for them or that He promised the Holy Spirit before ascending into Heaven.**

- These disciples were baptized **"into John's baptism"**—either baptized by John himself or by one of his disciples who carried the message of repentance after John's death.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

John preached and baptized in preparation for the Messiah. John prepared the way for these disciples so they would be ready to receive Jesus fully and be baptized in the name of Jesus.

- Were they saved? Were they Christians before the filling of the Holy Spirit? **God had begun a good work in them, and God would see to completing that work.**

"THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME ON THEM"

Before Paul came to Ephesus, these disciples did not display the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But when Paul laid his hands on them, **the power and presence of the Holy Spirit were evident as they began to speak in tongues and prophecy.**

- Because of this, some believe that tongues are still evidence of the Holy Spirit in a Believer.

IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES STILL EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The idea that a group of Believers has not received the Holy Spirit because they do not speak in tongues is in opposition to the Spirit's work of unity and to Scripture's teachings about the Spirit being given to all Believers, accompanied by varying gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12).

- Paul would ask rhetorically in 1 Corinthians 12:30, **"Do all speak in tongues?"**

ARE THERE TWO BAPTISMS?

Acts moves away from the Old Covenant, where all of history awaited the Savior. John prepared the way for the Messiah, saying He would come and **"baptize with the Holy Spirit"** (Luke. 3:16; Acts 1:5). Through His blood on the cross, the New Covenant was established. **We aren't baptized in preparation for the Messiah but as a sign of surrender to Jesus' work on the cross.**

THE KINGDOM OF GOD (ACTS 19:8-10)

"SPOKE BOLDLY OVER A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS"

Paul set a new record by preaching in the synagogue for three months before he was run out.

- This time, it would not be persecution that caused Paul to depart but a stubbornness and unwillingness to believe. Some **people's hearts were hardened, and they publicly slandered the Way** (Matthew 7:6).

"CONDUCTED DISCUSSIONS EVERY DAY"

Paul shook the dust off his feet (Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5), withdrew from the synagogue, and took his teaching to the lecture hall of a Gentile teacher named Tyrannus.

- Ancient writings tell us that Paul taught during "off hours" (11 am-4 pm), when most people would rest from work. He taught daily during this time at the lecture hall for two years.

PAUL WASN'T WORKING ALONE

Paul's time in Ephesus was spent equipping other Believers to go out and plant churches in Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.

- The work in Ephesus was broad and effective because Paul remained **faithful to preaching truth and equipping Believers** to take the gospel out, allowing all who lived in Asia the opportunity to hear the Word of the Lord.

"PERSUADING THEM ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Jesus often taught through parables about the "Kingdom of God," but what is it?

- In a broad sense, the Kingdom of God **is the rule of an eternal and sovereign Creator over all the universe.** It includes those who willingly submit to His authority. The Kingdom **has already come** through Jesus, but **we await its completion in the future.**

WHO ARE YOU?" (ACTS 19:11-20)

GOD WORKED UNUSUAL MIRACLES

Luke tells us that God was performing extraordinary or unusual miracles by Paul's hands at this time.

- Similar to the hem of Jesus' garment (Matthew 14:36) and Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15), those who came in contact with Paul's "facecloths or aprons that had touched his skin" were healed.

WHY HERE? WHY NOW?

Jesus performed miracles for three purposes, and the apostles followed the same pattern: 1) **to show compassion and meet needs,** 2) **to teach a spiritual truth,** and 3) **as proof of authority.** The miracles themselves did not save the lost but were always done in tandem with **sharing the gospel.**

- These unusual miracles demonstrated God's power in the center of the occult.

SATAN SENDS COUNTERFEITS TO DISRUPT THE WORK

God was healing in unusual ways in Ephesus, and others took the opportunity to **exploit the truth and power of God for their own gain.**

- There was a group of itinerant Jewish exorcists that traveled from house to house using a lot of superstition and ceremony in their trade, and **they adopted what they thought was Paul's formula for success.**

THE SEVEN SONS OF SCEVA

Luke tells us that the ones doing this were the sons of a Jewish high priest. We do not know what type of high priest Sceva was because he is not listed in Josephus's historical writings.

- Whoever the sons were, they were not a threat to the demons. **The demons knew Jesus, and they had heard of Paul, but the sons of Sceva were unknown to them.**

"I COMMAND...BY THE JESUS THAT PAUL PREACHES!"

The seven sons of Sceva did not have a relationship with Jesus, so they had **no power in wielding His name. They also had no protection from Jesus** as they flippantly entered into spiritual warfare.

- The man who had the evil spirit overpowered the seven men, and they ran from the encounter naked and wounded.

THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

God used this scheme of the enemy to convict the hearts of those in Ephesus who still were involved with the occult and ensure that **"the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high esteem."**

- Books were very expensive in the ancient world, and Luke says that **the burned occult books totaled the annual salaries of 150 people.**

POWER AND PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Something alerted Paul that the disciples in Ephesus had not received the promised Holy Spirit.
- When people look at us, would they see an absence of the Person and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
- Have we seen our need for saving without trusting in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit?

SEEING THE DIFFERENCE

- We know that Satan has power, but the power he possesses is no match for the power of God.
- Can we tell the difference between the power of Christ and imitators?
- There is power in the name of Jesus, and that power comes from a personal relationship with Him.