

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

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“Acts 18-19”

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With

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Acts 18-19 introduce three people that become part of Paul's ministry and the storyline of his missionary journeys: Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos. This episode discusses some of the language in Luke's description of how the testimonies of people who embraced Jesus outside the ministry of the apostles were authenticated by the laying on of hands and manifestations of the Spirit identical to the phenomenon of Pentecost. Two incidents at Ephesus (the "sons of Sceva" encounter with a demon and the riot at Ephesus) are also discussed.

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 54, Acts 18-19. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

MSH: Pretty good. Glad to be back.

TS: Well good. So Mike, I know people are anxious to get back into Acts, so Acts 18-19. Are you ready?

MSH: Yup, let's jump in. We got two chapters so we'll probably not read all of the material as is our custom. But let's jump in here with Acts 18, and this is going to be the account of Paul in Corinth. So beginning in verse 1 in chapter 18,

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."⁷ And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.⁸ Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent,¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

MSH: Now this is pretty typical of what we've seen to this point in Acts. Paul has his particular method. He'll go into a city. He'll begin with the synagogue because the message of the Messiah is to the Jews first, because it's their Messiah, son of David, and he'll try to persuade them to embrace the idea that this Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. We've talked about what that title means way way way back episodes ago as we began our study in Acts. And so when that doesn't work out, Paul will then take the message to the Gentiles. So this is pretty typical. You've already seen some familiar characterizations here in what I just read, the description of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, so this category of sort of God-fearing Gentiles. Here we have the Jews and Gentiles believing in the account. And I kind of like the phrase that the Lord gives Paul in verse 10. He says, 'I'm with you and no one will attack you to harm you for I have many in the city who are my people.'

Again, we've talked, really numerous times, about this whole notion of how what we see in Acts is the inauguration and the progressive fulfillment of the notion of laying claim once again to the nations that were disinherited, the Old Testament Deuteronomy 32 worldview, the notion that in every one of these nations, and there's going to be no exceptions, God will have people that will become part of his family. And through them, he will lay claim and infiltrate and expand the kingdom in those foreign territories, those territories that are under dominion in the Old Testament Deuteronomy 32 worldview, which carries into the New Testament. Now there are a couple of things that I want to point out. I'm going to skip around a little bit in Acts 18. The first few verses are sort of introductory. We get the names Aquila and Priscilla. So let's fix those in our mind and they're going to come up again and so is a character named Apollos in this chapter. So I want to point out something in relation to these other personalities, these other figures, and then I'll go back to another place in Acts 18 about Paul's vows. So let's just jump back in here in verse 18 when Paul leaves and returns to Antioch. We have here in verse 18,

¹⁸ After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. ¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. ²¹ But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.

²² When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. ²³ After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

MSH: So Apollos has a good reputation. Aquila and Priscilla hear him. He knows about Jesus but he only knows the baptism of John. So apparently, he had heard that Jesus was this messianic figure, the Messiah. Remember, John said, 'Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.' And we're not really necessarily told what he didn't know. Did he know about the crucifixion? Did he know about the resurrection? Did he know about Pentecost? We don't know really what the gaps were, but Priscilla and Aquila discern that there are gaps and instruct him. He's very teachable and they trust him.

They're excited about him. He wants to go back to Achaia, to Corinth, where they had just been, and they trust him. They let him do that. They send a letter along to encourage the disciples to welcome him and he does a good job showing by the Scriptures, as the chapter ends, that Jesus, or that the Christ was Jesus. Now I want to just park a little bit on this because there's going to be something that happens in chapter 19 that concerns this whole thing about knowing John's baptism and not knowing other things. Let's just jump into 19 and then we'll come back here and pick up Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos. So here's how chapter 19 begins. You know, 18 just ended with Apollos going back. You meet him in Ephesus and he goes back to Achaia and he does a good job. Chapter 19 opens this way.

And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴ And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

MSH: If you're paying attention, you probably know what it is I'm going to sort of talk about here. Let's just go back, pick up in Acts 18. We have Priscilla and Aquila who are Jews because they've been driven out by this order of Claudius. They're Jews and believers. They go to the synagogue with Paul. Paul speaks to the Jews there and he has to go the Gentiles. We're familiar with that. Then we hit verse 18 where we read, 'After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria.' He leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. And then he leaves Ephesus and continues on his journey. And then in verse 24, a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. So Apollos shows up. He's an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. Aquila and Priscilla hear him in the synagogue. They're still going to the synagogue to try to win people with the gospel of Christ. They hear Apollos, wow, listen to this guy.

He gets it but there are some gaps in his knowledge. They take him aside and explain to him the way of God more accurately. Now we're not told what they told him, what they taught him, what the gaps were. But he accepts the teaching and they send him on. He actually goes back to Corinth and then, he and Paul, their paths don't cross. They miss each other because of their journeys. And then we go on to chapter 19 where Paul meets, now catch this, Paul meets some disciples. This is sort of like Aquila and Priscilla meeting Apollos. These are people who believe. They have some knowledge of who Jesus was. But when it's Paul running into these people, Paul asked them a question. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said no, we didn't even know there was one. What's that? And then he says, 'Unto what were you baptized?' It was John's baptism. Now this part we're told something sort of similar about Apollos.

Back in verse 25 and chapter 18, we read Apollos had instructed in the way the Lord. He was fervent in spirit. He taught accurately the things concerning Jesus although he knew only the baptism of John. So Apollos and these disciples here are sort of, it sounds like in the same sort of theological boat. And what does Paul do? Paul says that's good, that's good John baptized with the baptism of repentance telling the people who believe in the one who was to come after that is Jesus. Again, Apollos already knew something about Jesus. We read that in chapter 18. We're not told what the gaps in his knowledge were. But Paul says you need something else. Part of the discussion, what emerges is that we need to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. So the question is the treatment of Apollos and these disciples in Acts 19, because you have sort of the same kind of situation in 18 that you have in 19. Again were not told a lot of detail but it sort of sounds similar, if not the same, but why do we get these two different descriptions? On the one hand, Aquila and Priscilla just apparently teach Apollos some things he needs to know about Jesus.

Again, we're not really told what the details were and Paul goes a little further than that. He's concerned with this whole matter of into what were you baptized. Then he finds out they really just know about John, John's baptism. And then they're convinced they need to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul lays his hands on them. Spirit comes upon them. They speak in tongues. None of that happens to Apollos. What's the difference here? I think a few observations we can make about this is that you have to realize Aquila and Priscilla, based upon what were told, have no apparent connection to Pentecost. In another words, they may or may not have even known about what happened at Pentecost. And we know that they learned about the gospel. They were in Rome. Somebody who was at Pentecost went back to Rome and Aquila and Priscilla wind up hearing about Jesus and they believe. But they don't necessarily have any of the details. We can't really conclude that. All we can conclude is that they heard the gospel and believed it.

It's sort of understandable that they don't instruct Apollos about the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost because we don't really know if they even knew about it and they certainly hadn't experienced it. And Luke, who's writing all this stuff, he's the author of the book of Acts, doesn't make any connected comment about Pentecost either. We've seen this before, that when people run into different disciples that they don't directly know, that they didn't directly win to the truth, there's this need to know that, okay, what you're claiming that you believe in and your understanding theologically of who Jesus is, we need that validated. And the way that that gets validated is there's some connection back to Pentecost, and that's typically speaking in tongues, but we're not sure that Aquila and Priscilla know that and so we don't read about anything like that happening. Secondly, Aquila and Priscilla were also not apostles. They were not two of the 12. They had no authority to re-baptized Apollos in the name the Lord Jesus even if they knew that they should do that.

We've assumed that they would but they don't have any authority to do that apparently. They also don't have authority to lay hands on him and impart the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is something that as you read the book of Acts, as you read through Paul's letters, this is something specifically connected to the apostles, to people who had been present at Pentecost or who had been personally encountered by Jesus and trained by Jesus, had this authority of this ability. And it really become sort of a litmus test that when we lay our hands on you, if you speak in tongues, if you give some evidence of the Spirit's activity just like what happened at Pentecost,

then we know that God is validating your testimony to us. We know that this is all the work of the same God and we're all kosher here. We're all on the same page theologically. So this was important but you only see this connected with the apostles. The third thing is, if you look at it this way, this account therefore actually validates Paul's status as an apostle. Now earlier in the book of Acts, think about it.

Think of the turf we've covered to this point. If you actually did a search for something like baptism and spirit in the book of Acts, this is the first time that Paul is the one who, through the act of baptism, has the Holy Spirit come on someone. He has baptized people earlier, earlier in the chapter, earlier in 18, but the situation here is that now we're not talking about converts that Paul had won. Paul doesn't need them validated because he's the one who led them to the Lord. This is the first time we have Paul meeting other disciples and so he has questions for them. He wants to know that we're on the same page theologically. This is the same kingdom of God we're talking about. And he needs it connected back to Pentecost, and so when he lays his hands on them, he and they as well, get this validation. This is the first time Paul does something like this. Earlier in Acts, this happened with Peter several times if you remember the turf we've covered in Acts chapter 2, repent and be baptized every one of you. Of course, they all speak in tongues. Acts 8:14 to 24, Acts 10 with Cornelius, Peter three times has this situation where through a baptism event that there's a manifestation of Pentecost. And it validates that the testimonies of the people that they're encountering.

Here we have Paul do this and so Paul essentially does what Peter did. Paul essentially has the same status to ask these questions and lay hands on this person and get the validation, the Pentecost signage, that they're for real, and it's the same gospel. We're all talking about same kingdom of God here. Since Paul can do this, it links him back to what Peter was able to do, and therefore by extension, it validates Paul's status as an apostle. Now Luke doesn't use this to make that point. I'm just making the point that if you sort of observe the pattern, someone reading this would easily draw that conclusion. Paul had baptized people before, Acts 16, the Philippian jailer, Acts 18 here as we just read. This is the first time he has this situation, meeting someone who says, yeah, we're believers. And so what are you baptized in? John the Baptist, what else? So this helps to validate their testimony because it creates this link back to Pentecost. It's really important so this is why in certain scenes in Acts and in the epistles too, you don't always have the same kind of description going on. The circumstances are little bit different and there's a reason for it.

There's a reason for Pentecost signs. It's not, 'I'm happy in Jesus now so I'm going to speak in tongues.' No, in Acts and the epistles, this was something that took your testimony and your experience, your claim to faith, it took it right back to the source and that was the Spirit who came at Pentecost, who was the promised Spirit in response to certain Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the spirit and the coming of the kingdom and all this, and what Jesus had said would happen. These are important theological connections that the apostles are experiencing, that Luke is including in the account, so we would presume okay we would presume that if Paul had met Apollos, he would've done the same thing. Aquila and Priscilla really aren't at this status.

They may or may not have known. But we could assume if Paul had crossed paths with Apollos, and Apollos says, hey, I'm a believer too, that he would've asked the same question, laid his hands on him, and done the same thing because that's just the pattern. It's the pattern with Peter and now we see it here with Paul. Paul later comments about Apollos, he accepts his

testimony, so apparently somewhere along the line, Paul got his verification or was satisfied through the testimony of others. Yes, this guy is preaching the same Gospel, and so on so forth. We don't get the scene where they actually encounter each other in this way in Acts. But Paul learns who this guy is later on and alludes to him in the epistles. Let's go back to Acts 18 and going back to verse 18 in that chapter, I'll read it again.

¹⁸ After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.

MSH: Now I just want to make a little bit of a comment. This is probably something that a lot of people listening to the podcast have heard about, maybe not in as much detail before, but there's a lot of discussion as to what this vow was. Why is Paul doing this? What's the point, because it's going to, this thread begun in Acts 18, is going to show up later, be connected later to Paul being at the Temple at Jerusalem. That's where he runs into trouble. The honest answer is it's not really certain what kind of vow this is. There are basically three views to this, at least among scholars who take the account seriously, as this actually happened historically, it's historically accurate.

Two of the three have a Jewish flavor to them, Jewish background. One, and probably the most obvious, sort of the default view is that Paul had taken a Nazarite vow. That is described in Numbers 6. It basically concerned a vow that involved certain things. It involved not cutting your hair. It involved not drinking wine or eating anything of the fruit of the vine, not touching a dead carcass. Sampson was a Nazarite, for example. Probably the most notorious example because what happens with him. So this is possible if he's cutting his hair here. It says he was under a vow. You'd have to sort wrestle with the verb form a little bit and maybe translate it, 'he had been under a vow', or something like that. But it could work. This could be a Nazarite vow and he's at the end of it because he's cutting his hair. Or you could say he was cutting his hair so that it can grow fresh. You read all sorts of things. But cutting hair would be something if it's a Nazarite vow that you do at the end. And so that brings up the question, is what he's doing here connected later on with what happens in Jerusalem? Some say yes. Some say no.

So it's not cut and dried. Second option is it might be just a vow of thanksgiving to God because God had promised him in verse 10, a few verses earlier in Acts 18, that God would protect him. It could be just some sort of a personal vow Paul makes in return for God's message to him. The Lord's message to him, that he would be protected in this place, just saying thank you. It could be just a personal thing. We don't know. A third option, and this has a Gentile or Greek background, is that there are accounts, especially with sailors, people who are about to set sea on a sea journey, that they do cut their hair and shave, shave their heads, shave their face, clean-shaven, as sort of a vow to their own gods for safety on the voyage, that sort of thing. There are references to that in the classical Greek texts. And so this would get filed under Paul, when I'm around the Jews that I do what Jews do. When I'm around the Gentiles, I do what Gentiles do. It could get filed under that he was doing this toward his God, sort of to fit in. He didn't want to be the guy that's perceived as, hey, everybody else has shaved their head around here.

What are you doing? You're going to bring us bad luck and that kind of thing. It could be that. We just don't know. I would say I think there is something of a connection later on when Paul gets to Jerusalem and the Temple. I realize it doesn't have to be a necessary connection, but it seems to me that because of that and also because of Paul's own Jewish heritage, that there's probably a Jewish reason for doing this. There's probably something in his own background as a Jew, either a Nazarite situation or a personal vow to the Lord because of the message he received. But I'm just letting you all know there's a third possibility. The honest answer is nobody's really completely sure as to exactly what kind of vow this was. Let's jump back into Acts 19 and we're going to go down to verse 11 with the account of the sons of Sceva. In verse 11 we read,

¹¹ And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." ¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" ¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

MSH: Now just a few comments on this sort of strange episode. It is odd going with the way the ESV has this, at least for now. It's strange that a "Jewish high priest" would have the named Sceva. It's not a Hebrew name or anything like that. You have to also ask yourself, what is a Jewish high priest, a high priest, doing in the Roman province here in Asia or what was called Asia at the time, Ephesus. That's just an odd place to find the Jewish high priest. What's he doing there? And scholars have wondered about this because it is just odd. The real problem is that there are records of who the high priests were back at this particular time period. So the names the high priests among the Jews, at least 28 of them, are known from Herod the great to the first Maccabean revolt.

And this guy's name is not in the list, Sceva. So right away there's an issue there. There's a problem. This is probably a translation issue. It may be that the term here, the Greek term is *Archiereus*, should not be translated high priest but something like chief priest. In other words, a member of a priestly family who had a certain stature as important, maybe the same family the high priest was taken from, but not the high priest. He's just a chief priest. And this term is actually used that way in Acts 4:23. So there's New Testament precedent for that. And that's

probably the best way to take that term here because this guy isn't known among the high priests, at least in the ancient texts, the roll call, so to speak, for this period. So that is a way to resolve that problem. There's another interesting possibility here, and I'm going to quote Father Fitzmyer, Joseph Fitzmyer here in his Anchor Bible commentary, who just speculates. This is just speculation.

We don't know this for sure, but again, it's kind of interesting. He writes that *Archiereus* was also used in the Eastern Mediterranean world, so that's part of the world we're in, in an entirely different sense than either high priest or chief priest. Augustus, who was the Emperor, although he did not like the ruler cult of the Eastern Empire, he tolerated the Temple being directed in the province of Asia to Roma and Augustus. The commonality of Asia, just the Asian religious community, held annual meetings to further this cult. The main leader of this cult was called *archiereus tēs Asias*, the high priest of Asia. So they actually used this term to describe a Gentile high priest or least the pagan. Now here in Acts 19, we have this *Archiereus* called a Jew, so here's the possibility that Fitzmyer speculates about. It's possible that Sceva may have been a sort of a renegade Jew, in other words, someone who was Jewish that defected from the worship of the God of Israel and became a high priest in a pagan cult. And so here you have this guy in Ephesus, who's a Jew by ethnicity and by birth, but he's a pagan. It flips things around here. And he sees what Paul is doing here and the fact that, holy cow, when you just have a handkerchief that Paul used, or something just touched him and people are healed, and the demons are cast out. And so they start to, him and his colleagues, people who were on his side religiously speaking, try to sort of use the name of Jesus as part of their own rituals, part of their own magical stuff that they were doing.

Again, the irony here it could be, again, Fitzmyer is very clear he's speculating, that you have Jews, a Jew who's a high priest and other Jewish exorcists, that are using pagan rituals and pagan magic, pagan beliefs, pagan theology, to try to cast out demons and they sort of just throw Jesus name into the mix here. Because if you read much into occult literature here, knowing the name of the deity or the divine thing that you're speaking to is a big deal because the belief was if you know the name, then you can exert power over the entity. And so they want to add Jesus to the mix of whatever it is they're doing and, of course, they fail spectacularly. The spirit says Jesus I know. Paul I recognize, but who are you guys, and they get their butts kicked pretty badly in the account. So you actually could have a situation where the things are reversed. You have a Jew who should've been hearing what Paul said and understanding that Paul's claiming that this Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and look at the proof. But instead, they want to sort of add this to their toolbox, their pagan toolbox, and they pay the price for it. Now the message to the community is probably why this account is here.

The narrative shows that some were presuming that maybe what Paul was doing was by magic techniques. Simon, remember back earlier in the book of Acts when we encounter Simon and Simon sees the gift of the Holy Spirit and he wants to pay to have this ability, and Peter rebukes him, and so on so forth. Some still might be thinking this is about magic techniques or incantations or rituals or whatever. But the lesson to the people who are converts, verses 19 and 20, a number those who practice magic arts and who had come to believe in Jesus, the message to them was that the power of the Holy Spirit was not to be mixed with magical or occult practices. The correct response is to get rid of that stuff, to reject it. You don't treat Jesus as something that goes in your toolbox or, this is an anachronistic statement because they don't have a New Testament, but I'm not going to go get my New Testament and slide it next to the my

occult books on my bookshelf, and now I'm spiritual. Now I'm adding Jesus to the things I believe in with the gods I worship or something like that.

We see people do this even in today's world. They're inclusivistic. They think Jesus is just one of dozens of other things that you could believe in, and so we want to cover all our bases, and so we'll add him to the box. Put them on the bookshelf. Add another notch on our belt here. We just want to make sure we're safe with the supernatural world, so we're including him. We're not rejecting him. And the account here shows, hey, the correct response is just to dump everything else. Just get rid of it. Reject those things, and, hence, they have this burning. They burn these books the people bring. You notice that the apostles don't say, hey, everybody bring out your books now and let's have a book burning. They do this in response to what they had seen and in response to this story. They get it real clearly. This is different. This Jesus, whom Paul has been preaching and we've seen him do miraculous things in the name of this Jesus.

This is not just something else we put on the shelf. This is not a new chapter in our little occult ritual arsenal. This isn't just something else we add to our belief system. It's either this or none of the above. And they bring their books out and they burn them. Jesus cannot coexist with these things. And so the account brings that lesson forward pretty clearly I think. One last thing in Acts 19, we should say something about the riot at Ephesus. I'm not going to read through the whole account. It's pretty familiar. I'll read the beginning of it here.

²¹ Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

²³ About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning 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. 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."

MSH: Of course, that starts a riot. Paul has to be restrained from going into the stadium there where everybody's assembled. And eventually, after a few hours of it, it gets broken up and we know the rest the story. But I think we should say a little bit about Artemis and this statement about gods made with hands. Artemis, if you do any reading on Artemis, you'll know there's more than one. So you don't really know which phase of Artemus religion we're talking about here or even which Artemis we're talking about here. So I'm going to quote again from another source. This is the Social Science Commentary, the book of Acts by Bruce Mallona, the first name escapes me at least at this point. They say 'modern scholars like to note that the cult of Artemis at Ephesus was syncretistic, since this goddess had little in common with Artemis of

earlier Greek religion,' so there's at least two that they're talking about here. 'She was fused with the older Phrygian Sybal or the Phoenician Astarte,' Ishtar might be more familiar. 'All such historical niceties were of no concern to her first century devotees,' people didn't care. 'The temple at Ephesus, the Artemisian, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient worlds,' so this is where Paul's at, this place.

'Began in the eighth century BC, it was expanded about 550 BC but burned on the night Alexander the great was born in 356 BC, and its replacement was begun in 350 BC,' and that's going to be the one that Paul finds himself at. 'Since the ancient world religion as a social institution was embedded in kinship and politics, Paul's preaching that diminish the importance of Artemis and her temple was viewed as a political act, a challenge to political religion,' civil religion is what we would use today. 'Moreover, since economics as well was not a freestanding social institution like it is today, but was similarly embedded in kinship and politics, Demetrius and his fellow artisans grievance against Paul concerned the domestic, the economic life, damage to the political economy.' They couldn't tolerate this. Demetrius' problem of course was with the effect of Paul's teaching among the assimilated Hellenistic Israelite worshipers who forsook Artemis to return to the fidelity of the God of Israel and Israel's Messiah, Jesus. So they've got a big problem.

Those people are not even in the temple anymore. They're not going to be buying our trinkets. We got to do something about this guy Paul. And again, we know the story. They initiate a riot. Paul was not harmed in the situation. He's restrained from people, and it's kind of interesting, if I can find the verse here. Verse 31 or let's go back to verse 30, when they gather in the theater, they start screaming great is Artemis of the Ephesians or a new translation might say great is Diana of the Ephesians. Diana is the Roman name for the same goddess. Verse 30 says,

³⁰ But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹ And even some of the Asiarchs, [**MSH: another term that refers to priests, religious figures who were most likely pagans. We're not told if they were won to the Gospel. Chances are they were. They're trying to restrain Paul. They're trying to protect him]** who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.

MSH: So maybe that sent messages like don't do it, don't do it, don't do it, and eventually, they discourage him from doing it. So he's not harmed in the episode. But they do have this riot. Now, let's go back to this statement that really sort of kicks off of the riot that the Demetrius says, that Paul has turned a great many people away from Artemis saying that gods made with hands are not gods. Now if you actually look in the book of Acts, this line is actually never uttered by Paul anywhere in the New Testament, although it conceivably harkens back to Acts 14:15 where Paul says, 'you should turn away from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven of the earth and the sea and all that is in them.' So Paul does say things like that, and you have to know a little bit about the logic of idolatry. Idolaters did not believe that their idols were the deities that were from the supernatural world.

They believed that the idle that they made was a place where that deity took up residence, so that when you when you smashed an idle, you didn't kill the deity. You just destroyed his house or her house and so you build another one. And then you would summon, through whatever ritual, you would summon that entity back and they would take up residence again. So the idle was and wasn't a deity. It wasn't really a deity because the reality behind the whole idea was part of the spirit world. And Paul affirmed the reality of those beings. We know that from 1 Corinthians 8, when Paul is talking about whether it's okay to eat meat sacrificed to idols and 1 Corinthians 8, he more or less says we know that an idol's nothing. It's just a piece of wood and stone, and we know there's only one for us. He actually says, this is language, for us believers, there's one God, and one Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't deny that there are others for other people.

But he's saying look, these idols, they're just nothing. Don't worry about it. But then in chapter 10 in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul takes a different trajectory. He's concerned in that chapter; we don't get the full details in chapter 8. We get a little more detail in chapter 10. Then he recommends, okay, the meat that's sold in the marketplace, go ahead and eat. Don't ask questions and so on so forth, but he forbids them to eat meat sacrificed to idols when it can be connected to what he terms fellowship with demons. And if you look at 1 Corinthians 10, right around verse 20-22, and you look at the cross-reference system in your Bible, chances are it will point you back to Deuteronomy 32, because Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 32 in several places in 1 Corinthians 10. Specifically, he's quoting Deuteronomy 32:17, and he's talking about the Israelites. The Israelites sacrificed to gods that were not God, sacrificed to demons, new entities that they had never known.

Paul quotes that passage, so we know that Paul understands that behind this dumb block of wood or stone, there is a spiritual entity, and he understands the belief system that this thing you want to pedestal, this statue or whatever it might happen to be, people believe that an entity is residing in this thing, because this localizes the deity for whatever reason, barter, worship offerings, whatever, he's well aware of that. But here, Paul, back in Acts 19, look at what they pick up on. Hey, this Paul is saying that gods made with hands aren't gods at all in. It is very similar to what the prophets are saying. He's really mocking idolatry and even more than that, he's mocking the real deities behind it. Because if this refers back in some way to Acts 14:15, let me read to you again where Paul says, 'you should turn from these vain things, these worthless things, to a living God, who made the heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them.' His point would be, like the prophets, is he's taking a jab at the powerlessness of other deities who can't create life.

They can't create squat. In fact, they themselves depend on having objects created for them to be considered powerful. It's a real poke in the eye. It's a real dismissive kind of comment. Why are you worshiping these vain things? You need to be worshiping the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and everything that's in them. Instead, you're worshiping some entity that needs you to make a little statue for it so you can relate to it or have some relationship or barter with it or whatever. If you don't make that, then it's like, I guess I don't have a place to stay now. They're not even powerful enough to act on their own behalf. They don't have the kind of demonstration of power that the God of Israel does, the God who made heaven and earth and everything in the sea. So it's a real slap in the face and so Demetrius and everybody else back here has every right to be incensed by it because the implications are so

sort of obvious. Another thing about Artemis is that in this chapter, there's a little sort of throwaway statement here, that says here, verse 35,

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.

MSH: So it's kind of interesting whereas Paul is saying, these gods, Artemis, whoever it is you're worshiping, they can't create anything. They're not from heaven. They're not divine in origin whereas this town clerk who, of course, is a worshiper of Artemis tries to claim and builds on the claim that our statue, maybe the stone or whatever, from what it was made, fell from heaven. It fell from the sky so it must be divine. It must have a divine origin. This is what they believed. So, you have this happen in a lot of cases where a meteorite or something will fall from the sky, and well, it must be from the gods because it came from up there. We don't live there. That's where the God's live. We live down here. And so this is of divine origin and so it becomes a talisman. It becomes a fetish object. So we're not quite sure, and neither are historians quite sure of what the statue of Artemis was made of.

There actually are texts later in the second century where, for lack of better term, are debunking books written by Christians that go around and actually interviewed people who made statues of deities and talk about these claims, and the statue of Artemis is actually one of them. And the book, its second century, it's an ancient book, went into detail that it really wasn't stone. It was wood. It didn't come from heaven. We worked on this. We did that. You actually have sort of debunking literature even back then. But be that as it may, Paul is saying, look, the real test of whether this object is divine in origin is can it do anything. Can it do anything? My God is the God who created heaven and earth and sea and everything in it. If you don't believe that there's power in that God and in his son whom he sent who was the Messiah who was the Christ, well, how do you explain the fact that I have the power to heal in his name? And it's not just a magical incantation.

I'm not throwing powders and dust into fire and whispering mumbo-jumbo here. I'm not doing any of that because you just saw here in your own town, here in Ephesus, you saw few people try to invoke the name of Jesus, like they're invoking all these other names, and they got their butts kicked. This deity, this God, this Lord has no rival. He is not just a tool in the toolbox. He's not going to coexist with these other flunkies, these pretenders. And so, I'm paraphrasing, essentially this is what Paul was communicating through what he's preaching and through what Luke is communicating through the episodes that he selects from what happened while they were in Ephesus to make very distinct deliberate theological points. Hey, it really comes down to who is, which entity really has power and which one doesn't. That should be sort of a litmus test that would make you decide to abandon one and choose the other, not try to combine them. This isn't smorgasbord theology.

You accept the one that is true and you reject the ones that aren't. This is the message of Acts. It's the message of so much of what Paul does and it has a real impact on what's going on. Last note, it's interesting that in a letter to the church of the Ephesians in the book of Revelation,

remember the letters to the churches, the Ephesian church is one of them. The Ephesian church is praised for not having succumbed to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, its Revelation 2:6 which held that Christians were allowed to eat meat sacrificed to idols since same passage, Revelation 2:14-15. So the people who are at Ephesus, the Christians who are in Ephesus, they are very careful to disconnect themselves from Artemis and any other foreign deity in their worship of Jesus, in their faith. They do not cross this line. They do not compromise by rejecting to participate in all that kind of stuff. Just look at the riot here in Acts 19. That would not have been easy for that church to do.

You know there's going to be pay back. You know there's going to be problems. You know there's going to be persecution. You know there's going to be hardship, but they stuck to it, and they're commended in the book of Revelation, decades later when that book gets written that you didn't compromise. You did not succumb to doing this. So it's just an interesting sort of footnote on their history. They stuck to it and they didn't waver in determining who was the God with power and who were the pretenders.

TS: Mike, is there any more language about Acts 19:16 where the evil spirit leaps and mastered, what that entailed exactly?

MSH: Leaped and mastered all of them, in the ESV, ESV actually has mastered and overpowered. I'm trying to think how I would characterize this. Both firms are in there but they are, I don't want to say that they're not connected, because in context they would be because they share the same object. As far as where the mastery verb occurs, I'll just look that up here real quickly to see if it's unique or not, it occurs three other times. 1 Peter 5:3, not domineering over those in your charge. I think the King James has not lording over them, and then it occurs twice in the Gospels, just to exert coercion or power, to lord it over someone to basically use the power at your disposal to coerce people. You're probably wondering is that verbiage something that could be associated with either possession or oppression. Is that sort of what's lurking behind the question?

TS: Yes

MSH: Yeah, I figured that. The tools I have aren't going to be exhaustive but I can tell you that the tools that I do have about the only thing you can really say are these two things. It involves exertion and coercion and it doesn't occur either in a New Testament passage or like a classical Greek passage of something like possession. Septuagint isn't any helper here because you have very little demon talk in the Old Testament to begin with. Even the word *shedim* which gets translated demons in the English translations only occurs twice. So you don't really get any help here. We should probably put this down. Let's put this down as a question for Q&A because I can look at some other sources to see if it ever occurs anywhere with that context. But I can just tell you the tools that I have now, the major lexicons for instance, don't cite any examples to that effect.

TS: Okay, I've got something else. In Acts 18:18, when Paul cut his hair when he was under that vow, the new King James version mentioned something about a feast where the ESV does not. I find that odd to have such extra language in a verse.

MSH: You said NKJ? Let me get my new King James here, see what it has. church verse 18?

TS: Yeah 21 when he's leaving, keep this coming feast in Jerusalem but I will return again to you, God willing.

MSH: Yeah, okay. It's a textual difference. It's a manuscript difference. Let me real quickly look up the NET Bible, because the NET Bible often tells you what the manuscript discrepancies are.

TS: Because it seems like I remember reading that this vow had something to do with this feast with Jews and such. So the reason why Paul cut his hair was to fit in because it was more or less he was going to be among the Jews. So to kind of get an ear and be accepted a little bit better, he kind of followed the traditions of that to get heard a little bit more amongst the Jews

MSH: Yeah, they don't even have, that's real curious. They don't even have any note even in the NET Bible but there is a footnote in my new King James version about it being a text critical issue. Since we're doing this on the fly here, let me just open Metzger's Commentary and see. That's sort of the go to commentary on textual stuff. Yeah, they don't mention it either. I'd probably have to really dig into, here they do say something. They call it an addition by something called the Western text, which is a minority Greek text. Here's the comment that Metzger has. 'The addition made by the Western reviser who has passed the later ecclesiastical text.' That's why it would be in the King James. They even say that. 'Therefore it is represented in the Authorized Version, I must by all means keep this feast that comes to Jerusalem.' Their supposition here is that it parallels a statement in chapter 20 about going to Pentecost and so that might be the reference to the feast but they think it's secondary.

If people are familiar with textual criticism just broadly, the textual base for the King James in the New Testament and the new King James in the New Testament is something called the majority text tradition, also called the Byzantine, also fairly somewhat incorrectly called the Textus Receptus. That manuscript family has about 80% of known manuscripts in it. You think wow, that's powerful testimony. Well, the problem is that the other 20% are almost always older, like Greek papyri. They're centuries older, and so there's this big debate in the New Testament scholarship. Should we use as our textual base the oldest manuscripts available or the mostest? The oldest versus the mostest, and since a lot of the oldest ones were not known until the 19th century and the 20th century, the King James translators did not have access to them and so they used the majority tradition that was available to them.

So you have in some cases there are a handful of significant differences, I wouldn't put this among them but there are a handful of significant differences between the manuscript traditions, which is why you'll get things in the King James that you won't get in any other modern English translation. If you've made an English translation New Testament after the mid-20th century, you're using a different textual base than what was used to create the King James.