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Is Where True Riches are Clarified and Sought After Acts Chapter 19

It is hard to imagine that all things will be subject to Christ and the church, but that is what heaven is. We will look at the Book of Acts, Chapter 19, this evening. Acts Chapter 19 is the broader picture of the foundation of the church which God is building; we will see the whole process. We know that the Book of Acts is about that foundation, isn't it? It is about the foundation which He has laid, the cornerstone which is Jesus Christ. This has been promised since long ago. I want to begin by reviewing some passages of the Old Testament that will point to this. One passage that I want you to look at is found in First Kings Chapter 7. Solomon is building the temple after the death of his father, David. There are a couple of verses that I want you to look at.

(1 Kings 7:9) “All these were of costly stones, of stone cut according to measure, sawed with saws, inside and outside; even from the foundation to the coping, and so on the outside to the great court.”

Sometimes people wonder how they cut the stones. Well, you do not have to guess. It says in the text with saws. Right?

(I Kinds 7:10) “The foundation was of costly stones, even large stones, stones of ten cubits and stones of eight cubits.”

From this verse, we know that some of the stones were at least a minimum of nine feet in length and often seven and a half feet thick. These are magnificent stones that you begin to perceive. What Scripture is telling us is that He was building the temple using costly stones. The Scripture is pointing to something. Though this is clearly the temple of God made with hands, it is pointing to the ultimate, eternal temple of God. Now look with me in Isaiah Chapter 28, which goes into the realm of the spiritual and how that foundation is going to be established. It is almost impossible for me to read Isaiah Chapter 28 without reading Isaiah Chapter 27. But then it is almost impossible for me to read Chapter 27 without reading Chapter 26. Even then, I have to go back to

Chapter 23. Let's start in Chapter 23, but we will ultimately end in Chapter 28. As you go into Chapter 23, what it is talking about is the city of Tyre. The city of Tyre is representative of the commerce of the world. It is a picture of the world's commerce and how people are overly busy and how they do things. We know according to Ezekiel that the city of Tyre was reflective of Satan himself. He was compared to the king of the city of Tyre. It is a pretty interesting analogy. As you continue into Chapter 24, there was a promise that God will tear down the cities of the earth. Why would He say that? Why would He need to do that? Because the earth was polluted. Man has polluted it with his degrading passions. Nor are we simply talking about the physicality of it.

(Isaiah 24:4) "The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away."

The earth is polluted by its inhabitants. They had transgressed the laws that violated the statutes of God. They broke the everlasting covenant.

(Isaiah 24:6) “Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.”

I want to know why everything is not “peachy keen.” There is probably a good reason for it. Isaiah goes on and talks about how God ultimately will destroy the things of this earth because there is a curse on the earth, because the inhabitants have polluted the earth. The description of the city is in verse 10:

(Isaiah 24:10) “The city of chaos is broken down; Every house is shut up so that none may enter.”

The city of what? Chaos. That is actually a perfect name for the cities of the world. They are cities of chaos. Everybody is basically pushing his own agenda. What God will ultimately do is:

(Isaiah 24:21) “So it will happen in that day, that the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high, and the kings of the earth on earth.”

God will ultimately punish both those in heaven and on the earth. That is an amazing text. In Chapter 25, as he begins to talk about the fortified city, he reflects on the cities of the world. In Chapter 24, he gives it the name “chaos.” In Chapter 25, he says:

(Isaiah 25:2) “For you have made a city into a heap, a fortified city into a ruin; a palace of strangers is a city no more. It will never be rebuilt.”

It is a pretty interesting analogy. If you have ever been in a big city and started walking around, you could rightly think, “I am in a palace of strangers.” Why? Basically, nobody knows anybody very well. I do not know why people would want to be with so many people whom they do not know, but that is another story. It says that this ruthless nation will be removed. Then it says:

(Isaiah 25:4) “For You have been a defense for the helpless, a defense for the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a rain storm against a wall.”

This is a promise of the Messiah. The day is coming when:

(Isaiah 25:8) “He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken.”

This is a great promise. That is why in Chapter 26 He says:

(Isaiah 26:1) “In that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah: ‘We have a strong city; He sets up walls and ramparts for security.’”

(Isaiah 26:2) “Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter, the one that remains faithful.”

(Isaiah 26:3) “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.”

The phrase in the King James Version says, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because You trust him.”

And, it goes on and says:

(Isaiah 26:4) “Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord we have an everlasting Rock.”

There is a key word I want you to zero in on. For in the Lord, we have an everlasting what? Rock. Rock. I am emphasizing this because this Rock is the stone upon which the city will be built. These are the fundamentals. Ultimately, His promise in Chapter 26 is that the day will come when He will deliver all His people. At the end, He basically says, “Shut the door. Wait for Me. I will be there in a minute. Let Me take care of this for you.” As we come to Chapter 28, it talks about the arrogance of His people. The promise that He gives to His people, in spite of their arrogance and in spite of their unwillingness to receive His kingdom, is in:

(Isaiah 28:16) “Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.’”

Again, we see the stone, the Rock. Romans quotes the text this way:

(Romans 9:33) “just as it is written, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and He who believes in Him will not be disappointed.’”

If you look in Verse 17:

(Isaiah 28:17) “I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level; then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies and the water will overflow the secret place.”

When you measure things, these are pretty cool measuring lines if you think about it. It is a great measuring line, isn't it? We begin to see the city being built. This was conveyed in Psalm Chapter 118. We see the promise of this stone that is going to come. It is a wonderful text if you have never read it. It starts off with the nations surrounding and wanting to destroy God's people, more specifically, wanting to destroy the Messiah.

(Psalm 118:10) “All nations surrounded me; in the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off.”

All of the nations are coming to destroy Him. But it says in verse 14:

Psalm 118:14) “The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.”

(Psalm 118:15) “The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

(Psalm 118:16) “The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

(Psalm 118:17) “I will not die, but live, and tell of the works of the Lord.”

(Psalm 118:18) “The Lord has disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over death.”

(Psalm 118:19) “Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the Lord.”

This is a messianic text.

(Psalm 118:20) “This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous will enter through it.”

(Psalm 118:21) “I shall give thanks to You for You have answered me, and You have become my salvation.”

(Psalm 118:22) “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone.”

(Psalm 118:23) “This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.”

(Psalm 118:24) “This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

What is the psalmist referring to? He is referring to the day in which God declares salvation through His Son. Now, every day is the Lord's Day because of salvation. We have entered into His rest. The cry is the very cry that we heard when Christ entered Jerusalem through the streets.

“Hosanna!” which is the phrase, “Oh Lord, do save us now.” It is the same as:

(Psalm 118:25) “O Lord, do save, we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity!”

What “Hosanna in the highest” means is “Save us now. Save us now, we beseech You.”

(Psalm 118:26) “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord; We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.”

Verse 27 is very interesting.

(Psalm 118:27) “The Lord is God, and He has given us light; bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.”

There is an interesting etymology or study of the whole concept of the cornerstone. Of course, we do not build buildings the way they did in the days of the Psalmist. What they would do first when building was to lay the cornerstone. Once the cornerstone was laid, it would begin to tell us what that building would be. All other stones in that city would have to match and lay in the direction of that stone in some way. In other words, that stone gave you your equilibrium. It would set the standard. You could tell how that building would be built through this cornerstone. Everything literally hinged on this cornerstone. Without it, there was no direction on how the building would go. When it was laid, it was the foundation of and the standard by which that city was to be built. This is what the Canaanites would do, which was even before the Israelites went into the land of Canaan.

This was already an established tradition. They would find the spot where the foundation was to be laid. The first thing they would do was sacrifice an animal on that spot. That animal would then be buried under the cornerstone. It was a declaration that would protect the city that was to be built there. When God was telling them these things in Scripture, they already knew because it was the culture. God used a culture that they knew to proclaim His city. “I am building a city that is going to be built on a Lamb that is to be slain.” The cornerstone was actually defined as the place of changing which was the corner. The place of change. The place “where you and I turn” would be another way to put it. God was establishing a place of turning that would be permanent; the sacrifice that was coming would bless His people. Every time you read the word cornerstone, know that it is that which is being conveyed. That is why you have in Verse 27, “The Lord is God. He has given us light. Bind the festival sacrifice” after He has talked about what? The stone. Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

(Psalm 118:27) “You are my God, and I give thanks to You; You are my God, I extol You.”

(Psalm 118:28) “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

We are definitely going to look at Acts 19; but if you will look with me in Matthew Chapter 16, we have the great text where Jesus was dialoguing with Peter. There was a lot of confusion because of all the prophecy that the dialogue is about. One of the reasons why Scripture is often confusing is because you are not reading other Scriptures which relate. So you do not have a point of reference. That is why it is important to not interject your own thoughts in Scripture. What does it say? Scripture is not a matter of one's own interpretation. In Matthew Chapter 16, Jesus turned to His disciples and said,

(Matthew 16:13) “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’”

They said, “Well, Jeremiah. Or it could be John the Baptist. It could be Elijah.”

(Matthew 16:15) “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”

(Matthew 16:16) “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

When he said, “Thou art the Christ,” he was saying, “Thou art the anointed.” He was also saying, “Thou art the Messiah.” They are all translations of the same word. We have talked about that before. When he said, “Thou art the Messiah,” he was saying, “Thou art the rock” because we know that the prophecy has always been that the cornerstone or the stone which the builders rejected would be that very foundation, the cornerstone. When he said, “Thou art the Christ,” what was he thinking? “You are the One whom we all follow; and therefore, you are the One, once you are laid, after whom we all pattern our lives. That is why Scripture says to imitate or be followers of Christ. Imitate Christ because He is the cornerstone. It is interesting that Job talked about the foundation of the universe and actually used the term cornerstone, the foundation of the universe. As it says in Colossians:

(Colossians 1:16) “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

Right? He is the pattern for all things. To continue in Matthew, Jesus answered Peter and said:

(Matthew 16:17) “And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”

(Matthew 16:18) “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

Though Jesus says that Peter is a rock, he is not the Rock on which the church is built; he is not the cornerstone. Christ is building His church, not Peter's church. I want to remind you of that. It will be touched upon again in Matthew Chapter 21. Jesus told a parable beginning in Verse 33 about a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a wall around it, dug a winepress, and then sent in his hired help to collect the rent. The tenants beat him up and

abused him. After a while, he said, “Well, I will send my son. They will not reject my son.” So he sent his son, and they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. It will be at this point that Jesus will quote the Psalms.

(Matthew 21:40) “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to the vine-growers?”

(Matthew 21:41) “They said to Him, ‘He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.’”

(Matthew 21:42) “Jesus said to them, ‘Did you never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone’; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”

Note that it was an insult to any Pharisee to ask if they had ever read the Scriptures. Romans Chapter 9:32-33 reiterates this text and says that you will not be disappointed if you trust in this cornerstone. Even though man rejects Him and does not see Christ as the measuring line or the standard, He is still the eternal building. The name son in Hebrew is “*ben*”; we often use the word Ben,

Benjamin. Ben or bane actually refers to the building block. Every family knew that if they had a son, they would build eternal value or a perpetual value. God ordained that the Son would be the building block of that which is eternal. Matthew emphasizes that point in Chapter 22 when he says that this is marvelous. In Ephesians Chapter 2, it tells us that through Christ, both the Jews and the Gentiles are reconciled together and have become one; we could say one building or one eternal building.

(Ephesians 2:18) “for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”

(Ephesians 2:19) “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,”

This is where we get our name--Family Bible Church.
(Ephesians 2:20)

“having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,”

So once again, this is what the Book of Acts is about. The foundation is being laid by the apostles who are following through with their testimony of Jesus. It is amazing that you could actually do this in a book, but you will find almost every conceivable circumstance that a church would have to contend with in the Book of Acts. This is why we are hitting the surface of these chapters because the truths that are being established in this book are laying the foundation. The question is: What does this eternal building look like? The apostles respond, “Well, as Jesus said before He left us in the Book of Acts, ‘You will be My witnesses.’” This book and the foundation therein laid will help us understand and get this down. They were to oversee establishing the foundation which is being laid by Christ Jesus. Continuing in Ephesians Chapter 2:

(Ephesians 2:21) “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,”

(Ephesians 2:22) “in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

We are dealing with inexplicable truths. I want to establish that correctly to begin with. In a way, you and I are those

stones that are building this real place in the heavens. When you see the New Jerusalem, the foundation stones are going to have the apostles' names. I do not know how that will work, but we know according to Revelation Chapter 21 that this cube is coming out of heaven. It will be one thousand five hundred miles cubed. I am not sure how those stones will fit. But I do know that there will be twelve foundation stones. Each one will be of high precious value, and each one will have an eternal Spiritual significance. I cannot comprehend that any more than I can comprehend that we will be eating from the tree of life. I cannot comprehend that. I know that I will be eating even though I will be in a physically transformed body. I have no idea how that will work. That will be a wild fruit, will it not? It is unimaginable. But it says that we are part of this building. Peter reiterates this. In First Peter Chapter 1:24, he talks about all flesh being like grass. Then in First Peter Chapter 2, he turns to us and says that we are precious stones,

(I Peter 2:3) “if you have tasted of the kindness of the Lord.”

(I Peter 2:4) “And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,”

That is a wild thought, isn't it?

(I Peter 2:5) “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

(I Peter 2:6) “For this is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.’”

(I Peter 2:7) “This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very cornerstone,”

(I Peter 2:8) “and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.”

(I Peter 2:9) “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of

Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

You can almost see the stone sparkling. When Revelation Chapter 21 talks about the Crystal City, know that you are part of it. I do not know exactly how this will happen, but you will be part of the sparkle of it. That is quite a thought. In Revelation Chapter 21, John was carried away in the Spirit and saw the holy city. What is this city called? The holy city, the new Jerusalem.

(Revelation 21:9) “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’”

There is only one group of people who are called the bride, the wife of the lamb. Who is that? The church.

(Revelation 21:10) “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,”

Called what? Go back to Verse 2:

(Revelation 21:2) “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”

It says in Verse 11:

(Revelation 21:11) “having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.”

This is one of the reasons why it is called the Crystal City.

(Revelation 21:12) “It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.”

(Revelation 21:13) “There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.”

(Revelation 21:14) “And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

As you continue through the description, it makes reference to all of heaven.

(Revelation 21:16) “The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as its width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.”

That is a cube. This is a magnificent picture of a magnificent crystal city that is coming out of heaven. It will reside over the new earth.

(Revelation 21:17) “And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.”

He is telling us that the whole city is designed for man and, more specifically, for God's church. The reason I went into such detail is because what is happening in the

heavens will take on tangible form. Food will be edible and joy will be seen as well as experienced. How wonderful is that? You will be part of that house. There is that wonderful statement by Jesus, “I go to prepare a place for you.” You will enter and say, “There is my name. There I am. This is my house.” You will feel instantly at home. How wonderful that is. You will not go to a strange place. This is where you belong. For all eternity, God has ordained that you are His bride. The very best of the best is for you. This is the reason that the church is so important. The world minimizes it. In other words, they will say that they were just words Jesus said. But remember that He is the stone they rejected. However, He is the standard, the only foundational stone, to which all of creation will be held. This is what the church is about. The church is defining the standards, and those standards are of eternal value in that eternal place. When we read through the Book of Acts, we see the foundation being laid; it is a real foundation. It is a Spiritual foundation that will take on physical form. I felt that it would be good to be able to visualize a foundation when we are thinking about the laying of the foundation in the Book of Acts.

As we come to Acts Chapter 19, one of the reasons I chose to talk about this now is the fact that we are in the city of Ephesus. One of the great concerns that Paul will have about the city of Ephesus is that they are focused on the wrong kinds of wealth and riches; and they are pursuing the wrong things. Their thoughts are that this is wealth; these are riches. He says, “You have no idea.” Therefore, when he writes to the Ephesians, he begins:

(Ephesians 1:4) “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love”

He continues by indicating that they would have riches of eternal value. “You have no idea what is in store for you.” He then turns to them and prays:

(Ephesians 1:18) “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”

(Ephesians 1:19) “and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might”

Obviously, neither you nor I could do this.

(Revelation 1:20) “which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,”

(Revelation 1:21) “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

(Revelation 1:22) “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,”

(Revelation 1:23) “which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Is that not a mystery? Yet, this is exactly what he writes about in the Book of Ephesians. He says, “I tell you this is a mystery. Who could have guessed that you Gentiles would be invited.” His statement in Chapter 3 is:

(Ephesians 3:8) “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,”

(Ephesians 3:9) “and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;”

(Ephesians 3:10) “so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.”

Are you catching this? Through the church to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places. In other words, you will teach things to heavenly beings. The church is going to be over them all. This is simply unfathomable. I am not on a power kick. I am telling you what it says, and it is hard for me to believe. He writes this to the church at Ephesus. I have to give you one more prayer which is in Chapter 3:

(Ephesians 3:14) “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,”

(Ephesians 3:15) “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,”

How many times do we see riches and abundance mentioned? Therefore, what does he want them to know? That there is wealth that they have not tapped into. We have no idea.

(Ephesians e:16) “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,”

I feel like He is measuring a city.

(Ephesians 3:19) “and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

(Ephesians 3:20) “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within in us,”

I remember my Dad quoted this to me. I would look at my dad and say, “I have a big imagination, Dad.” He would go, “It is beyond what you could think.”

(Ephesians 3:21) “to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

Who would have thought that we would be a part of something so grand, so marvelous, so wonderful? As we look at Chapter 19 in the Book of Acts, what is on the surface seems to be disjointed scenarios that happened in the region of Ephesus. However, they are anything but that. They are all tied together. It means us witnessing now. As we live and witness, we are learning about grace and mercy. The angels have not experienced either, so these will be some of the things we will teach them. In Chapter 19, Paul, having left Corinth, goes to the upper country to Ephesus, which is in Asia Minor. As he travels, we see a very strange scenario. He comes in contact with some of John the Baptist's former disciples, and they strike up a conversation.

(Acts 19:2) “He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’”

He said, “Well, you need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.” Paul baptized them, and the marvelous sign that was given was the same sign that we saw at Pentecost with Cornelius. It is actually only three times that this sign is revealed: the time at Pentecost, the time with Cornelius, and now the time with these disciples. It was the sign of tongues or other languages that was proclaimed. Why is that true? John the Baptist's disciples, even when Jesus was on the earth baptizing, saw themselves as an exclusive group. They were John the Baptist's disciples. The sign of tongues is a proclamation of the Word of God in all the languages. The sign is telling us that the Gospel is for whom? Everybody. There is no exclusivity. That had to be told to the Jews at Pentecost. It had to be told to the Gentiles when they first received the Gospel so they would understand that this message was for them as well, and it had to be told to John the Baptist's disciples who saw themselves as exclusive, as those following the baptism of repentance. Paul tells them that there is

something more. Paul then goes into the city and stays there for two years. He starts with the people in the synagogue. It does not work out well, which is the pattern we have seen. Then he rented from the school of Tyrannus. He began to strengthen the disciples. While in Ephesus, he performed miracles which is an interesting contrast from his time in Corinth. While he was in Corinth, he made tents in order to support himself. Remember? Now in Ephesus, people are walking in his shadow and being healed. People are being healed all over the place. Magnificent miracles were inexplicably happening. Paul did not announce a healing service. It just happened. God did the work. When God does the work, there is no confusion about it. It happens.

(Acts 19:10) “This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

(Acts 19:11) “God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul”

(Acts 19:12) “so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.”

This is probably where some of the charlatans get the idea of selling such things. It was a magnificent moment in time. There were evil spirits in the area to the extent that the Jewish exorcists had previously devised a system of exorcising demons out of people. That was big business in Ephesus. Why was there so much demon possession in Ephesus? Because they were infiltrated with mystics. They not only had the great Temple of Diana or Artemis, whether you were Roman or Greek; but they also had a lot of mysticism from the Orient. They had necromancers who called up the dead and cast spells. There were witchcraft and books on such topics. It was that kind of place. Are you getting the picture? Why is God allowing Paul to have this power? Because these superstitious people needed these signs. Why is it that John the Baptist's disciples saw the sign of tongues? They needed that sign. In every case in this chapter, people were looking for something but in all the wrong ways and all the wrong places. The church is here to correct all of that. We are not to condemn people who are searching. We are to correct where and how they are to find the truth. That is what is important. The problem is that man perceives

that certain things can fulfill their needs. We are not all alike. Different people have different needs. We are made differently; even so, groups of people are very much alike. There are large groups of people who feel a sense of belonging and a sense of security when they are in the realm of standards and laws. Some people feel that way. John the Baptist was filling a need of sorts. His purpose was not that; his purpose was to point, as Paul said, to the One who would ultimately fulfill them. There are always a weakness and a tendency to gravitate towards that sense of rigidity because it gives them security and stabilization. There are churches that build around that kind of thought process. Paul, however, turned to them and said, "You need to receive the Holy Spirit." His point was that there is a comfort, there is a security, there is a stability that will come only through the Spirit of God. It cannot come through merely saying that you need to get your life right. You need to repent. But how do you repent? Where is that force coming from? We gravitate towards somebody who seems to be authoritative. John the Baptist was very authoritative, so much so that even Pharisees went, "Wow. That is a pretty strict guy." The Pharisees called him strict. If the Pharisees were coming to him to be baptized,

he must have been quite convincing. Often, people will gravitate towards a personality or somebody like that. But what was happening there was the same thing as in Ephesus. There are all these parallels. In every single group, people were gravitating towards a source that they hoped would bring them some sort of satisfaction. In Ephesus, there had to be something beyond mysticism and witchcraft. Scripture says that God has put eternity in our hearts. If that is true, why is it that people seek mystics? Why is it they seek magic? Why is it that they go into witchcraft? I can tell you why. There is a sense of emptiness in their lives. There has to be something more. There has to be something beyond what they had. It has to be beyond this world. So, they begin to search for it. Another story in this chapter is about the seven sons of Sceva.

The name refers to the left hand. I think it is God's sense of humor going, "Well, that is a left-handed compliment." Have you ever heard the phrase "a left-handed compliment"? It is rather like left-handed help. They are not helping you. They are using you. What man does is to build an industry around people's needs. That is what they did. They were professional exorcists. They were

probably making a living off this. Then God in His grace had Paul come in order to show His great power. Of course, the seven sons of Sceva start using the name of Jesus because it seemed to be pretty powerful.

(Acts 19:15) “And the evil spirit answered and said to them ‘I recognize Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?’”

(Acts 19:16) “And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”

It was the grace of God. What happened when that took place? Through God's power and His work in people's lives, instead of the elevation of man, Christ was elevated. People were healed. They were not only healed, but they were changed. They were not only changed, but they were changed so much that they started burning all their witchcraft materials. What this tells us is that there is power from God. This is what we preach as a church. We do not preach ourselves. We do not preach a personality. We do not indicate that we are the answer to your

problems. We are not preaching that. What we are saying is that the Spirit of God will come into your life and will change you. We believe this. We believe that He is the source of genuine change. There are days when He works through me. There will be days when He can work through you in people's lives. They will say, "You blessed me." You will ask, "How?" You will not know. If you were to go up to Paul and say, "You healed my daughter", he would say, "I did not even see your daughter." Who healed the man's daughter?

God is doing it by virtue of the fact that we are being obedient, but God is doing it. When we are following and obeying and proclaiming Him, God can do great work, and he will change people. The church is not an organization like the organizations of the world which are using people, using their weaknesses, their desires, and their longings, for their own purposes. We are not exploiting people. We are pointing to Jesus, and we are saying He is the answer. We are not trying to be the answer. I am not trying to be the answer for people. Christ is the answer. Continuing in Verse 17:

(Acts 19:17) “This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.”

Who was being magnified? Not the name of Paul! We know that the seven sons of Sceva were exorcists. They were totally defeated by the evil spirit. It was not Paul who was being elevated, although he was doing far greater works than he had ever imagined doing. If God moves in a body, if it truly is God, Jesus will always be magnified. Always.

(Acts 19:18) “Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.”

(Acts 19:19) “And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

(Acts 19:20) “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.”

This happened in Ephesus. Paul had written to the Ephesians:

(Ephesians 1:18) “I pray that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”

They were burning money. Do you understand? They were burning money. On this day they realized that there was something more valuable than money. This chapter ends with the businessmen very angry because their business is hurting. They made these little idols of Diana, and people were getting rid of them and not buying them anymore. They say, “This guy is ruining our business.” Do you see what they were doing? It was the exploitation of those who were searching for something of greater value. The first thought that comes into most people's minds are, “I think we can buy it.” But God says to the Ephesians, “You have to stop thinking that way.” The foundation of the church is built on the truth that we believe that Christ is the answer. We never change on this one. We do not believe that we are the answer. Someone was asking me today about an individual's concern and a need the person had. I said, “I can tell you this. If that person is

right with the Lord, he will be taken care of.” It does not mean that we are neglectful, but we were talking about Titus. There is an interesting phrase at the end of Titus; in Chapter 3:14, Titus uses the phrase “pressing needs.” When it boils right down to it, there are very few pressing needs. There are some things that certain people should be doing for themselves. As Thessalonians Chapter 4:11 says, “If people will work hard, there will not be any needs.” What you want for this person to do more than anything else is to draw close to Christ. How many times have we quoted this verse? I have to quote it again:

(Psalm 37:25) “I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread.”

The righteous do not go without. They do not have any pressing needs. They do not.

(Philippians 4:19) “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

I believe that. That is what the church is built upon. That is what we are built upon. That is the message that we proclaim, and that is why we are so different. What you have seen in Chapter 19 is interplay between what men value and how they have to let go of that in order to receive the greater riches. To me this is the essence of Chapter 19. Many years ago, we had a group of witches and warlocks in the area. I remember we were at a Methodist Church. Remember, they came into the church. They were curious. We sat down and talked for probably an hour after the service. I felt like many of them were searching. They were looking for something real. Why should we get angry at that? Paul did not rebuke them for searching. What we need to do is to keep bringing people back to the turning place that brings them some sort of permanence and stability in their lives. That is Christ. There is no other answer. There is no other Name that has been given to men. Those who exploit them are not looking to help them. They are trying to make money off them. Look what the businessmen said when Demetrius called them:

(Acts 19:25) “these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, ‘Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.’”

They literally said that. That would be a cue to me if somebody said something like that. If they had been supporting Diana, their god, with the money, it possibly would not have been a selfish motive. What was the conclusion of this?

(Acts 19:29) “The city was filled with the confusion...”

(Acts 19:32) “So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together.”

What was the result? Yes, chaos. But the result of what we give people is peace. That is why the holy city is called Jerusalem, the city of peace. We are building on the peace that passes all understanding, a stability that cannot fade away, nor will it go away. Again, as Paul said:

(Ephesians 1:18) “I pray that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”

(Ephesians 3:20) “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within in us,”

This is what Christ does. That is what His church does. We tell people that, like John the Baptist's disciples, you were looking for something with stability and something that had boundaries. You will not find it through an institution or a personality. It is through the Holy Spirit. In each case, you see the correcting of those going after something that they value but in the wrong places.

Prayer

Father, we give You thanks that we have a city not of this world, but one, as Scripture tells us, that Abraham longed for, one that goes into the eternal. We have, as Hebrews says, a lasting city. Father, we are part of this. This is what

we build upon. Christ Jesus, the turning place of our lives, has turned us away from this world and turned us toward that which is permanent. We are so thankful that we have built our lives upon this. Thank You that we proclaim this eternal truth: Jesus saves. We give You thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.