An Uproar in Ephesus, Part I

Text: Acts 19:21-29

Introduction:

Great things have been happening in Ephesus. Last time, we saw how God had worked very unique and powerful signs through the Apostle Paul, to the extent that handkerchiefs and cloths were taken from his person and used to heal people. And many of those who practiced magic even, had come to Christ, repenting of their sorcery and burning all of their books in the presence of all. It was a great time of prosperity and joy in the Gospel!

But, as we would expect, where the work of God is moving forward; where the Gospel is gaining a victory footing, there will always be opposition as well. We saw this to a lesser extent, when some of the Jews in the synagogue had attempted to spoil the well, which the Apostle Paul was digging, by speaking evil of "The Way." This morning, however, a great riot erupts, as a group of idol shrine craftsmen, stir up a multitude of people against "The Way," as their lucrative business is threatened by the building of Christ's kingdom, which is obviously an attack against all idolatry. [Read verse 20 again]

I. The Sparking of an Uproar

"When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome.' So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time" (Acts 19:21-22).

In mapping out his journey, Paul had intended to move on from Ephesus (across the Aegean Sea) to Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea...etc), and then down to Achaia (where Corinth was), before heading back to Jerusalem, and then ultimately, at some point, to Rome. However, due to all of the action taking place at Ephesus and in broader Asia, (both, in what we have just gone over, and in what follows), Paul sends Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to

Macedonia, with the intention of meeting them there at some point. And so, he remains in Asia for a time.

All of that said, somewhere along the way, he receives word about various of the problems that have erupted in Corinth, which helps provoke the issues, which he addresses in 1 Corinthians. [Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-21 & 5:1ff & 16:5-11]. No doubt, these things added to Paul's grief as he wrestled through difficult trials in Asia.

Question #1: Consider the fact that the Epistle of 1 Corinthians was provoked in the context of what happens in these verses in Acts. What can we note about the profound working of God's providence here? [Marvel over the broader picture of Paul remaining in Ephesus, sending Timothy, getting a report back, and Holy Scripture being birthed through this process! If Paul had gone to Corinth at the first, would there have been need for a letter?]

Question #2: Read 1 Timothy 4:12. When reading through 1 & 2 Timothy, there is a clear sense in which the older and more seasoned, Apostle Paul, is attempting to embolden the younger protege, Timothy. What might we presume had happened to Timothy when he was at Corinth? [1 Corinthians 16:10-11]

"And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship'" (Acts 19:23-27).

Question #3: Compare these men to the "many" and the magicians from verses 18-19. Comment on this.

Question #4: What is revealing about the silversmith's comments, concerning the potential damage that "the Way" can pose against the "great goddess Diana?"
Question #5: Again, comment on how we can apply these things to our own context today.
Question #6: Why is the whole modern day notion of "COEXIST" a fallacy? [Also, an attempt to unite the creature at the expense of the Creator. Christianity cannot possibly exist in peace with false religions, any more than God can share His glory with another. COEXIST, by its very premise and nature is anti-Christian]
Question #7: Comment on the effects that one man can cause (positive - Paul; negative-Demetrius) by the use of his tongue. [See also 1 Corinthians 15:30-32]. [Just note 2 Corinthians 1:8-11]

"Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions" (vs. 28-29). [Note vs. 32 regarding the confusion]

Question #8: Comment on the fact that this uproar emerged out of a climate of confusion. Apply this to us today. What is the great danger, posed by our modern day "media?"
Question #9: What might this event do (positively or negatively) to the faith of Gaius and Aristarchus? [Consider 2 Timothy 4:9-16; affirm & strengthen or expose as shallow and empty]

[Note: The Revelation letter to the church at Ephesus in light of all the time Paul had invested there (Revelation 2:1-7)]

Amen!!!