

Kingdoms in Conflict (Acts 19:21-41)

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Introduction

1. Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem (a parenthesis, v. 1)
 - a. The question is whether *spirit* refers to Paul's spirit or to the Holy Spirit. Paul answers this question for us: "*And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there*" (Acts 20:22).
 - b. Why did Paul want to return to Jerusalem via Macedonia and Achaia?
 - 1) The churches in Judea were experiencing great hardship because of persecution and famine.
 - 2) Paul wanted to gather a relief offering from the Gentile churches and take it to Jerusalem (Acts 24:17; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-9:5).
 - c. Paul also expressed his desire to visit Rome (Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:10; 15:24, 28).
 - d. Luke will use the rest of Acts to record the fulfillment of this desire.
2. Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia (v. 2a)
 - a. Timothy probably carried the first epistle to Corinth.
 - b. Erastus is mentioned in Rom. 16:23.
 - c. Their mission was to prepare the churches for the offering that Paul wanted to take with him to Jerusalem.
3. Paul remains in Ephesus (v. 2b; note 1 Cor. 16:5-9)
 - a. The Lord had opened a "wide (*megas*) and effectual (*energace*) door" to the gospel (v. 9).
 - b. The Kingdom of God was invading the kingdom of man in a dynamic way (ref. Acts 19:11-20).
 - c. The consequence of this invasion: "many adversaries."
 - d. Satan will not leave the gospel unchallenged.
4. Last week we encountered the gospel challenge to religion (magic), whether of Jewish, Christian, or pagan occult origin. However, the greater threat to the gospel is not in spiritual concerns, but to a more base issue—profits (\$\$\$; note Acts 16:19; 24:26).
Thus, Luke writes: "About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way."

I. The Reaction (vv. 24-28)

1. The concern of Demetrius, a silversmith (v. 24)
 - a. His craft: making "shrines" (Temple Warden of Artemis), overseeing the idol trade
 - b. His motive: worship of Artemis brought "no little business"

2. The gathering of the craftsmen (vv. 25-28)

- a. His news: “Not only in Ephesus, but in all Asia” Paul (the gospel) had turned many away from idolatry (v. 26).
- b. His concern: “Our livelihood” is in danger by the gospel threat to the goddess Artemis (v. 27).

II. The Riot (vv. 29-34)

1. The mob: stirred by the enraged artisans

- a. Reacted, being “filled with confusion,” a term that indicates mindless behavior.
- b. Rushed together into the Roman amphitheater (seated 25+ thousand) with “one accord”—unified in their senseless pursuit.
- c. Dragged Gaius and Aristarchus (not Paul) with them, probably to hold them accountable for threats to their religion.

2. Two efforts to quell the riot (vv. 30-34)

- a. Paul was prevented from speaking by the disciples and “Asiarchs,” high ranking officials who were Paul’s friends, because the mob was dangerous (note v. 32).
- b. Alexander, a man the Jews put forth to make a defense (*apologia*) was drowned out with a two-hour chant. The Jews sought to distance themselves from the Christians, but the mob saw no difference—both were “atheists.”

III. The Response (vv. 34-41)

1. The “town clerk” (*grammateus*, a local official who acted as liaison between the city and Rome) used sense to quell the riot.

2. His argument: right and order

- a. Artemis needs no defense (v. 35, 36a).
- b. The riot is rash and dangerous (vv. 36b and 40).
- c. The religion of Paul was legal (at that time, v. 37).
- d. Demetrius should use the courts for his complaint (v. 38).
- e. Further dispute should be settled in regular assembly (v. 39).

Application

1. Two great dangers threaten the gospel: (1) relating to God on self-referential terms, and (2) using the gospel for self-aggrandizement.
2. The gospel is powerfully advanced by the Spirit of God. We must not seek to “help” the cause by means of schemes of human invention.