

Acts 19:8

8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

I don't know about you but I am not a person that likes change. Humans are creatures of habit. How many of you sit in the same section of the sanctuary each Sunday?

Change is hard. Thomas Aquinas prayed once, "Lord, help me to be right because you know how hard it is for me to change."

One of the greatest evidences of God's power is change. As we saw last week, the book of Acts is a witness to us of change that was brought by the hand of God. Empty Religion was transformed into Christianity as people changed from a legalistic view of the world to a relationship with Jesus Christ.

In Acts 19 we find the Apostle Paul in Ephesus on his 3rd missionary journey. Last week we discussed the question that he asked the 12 men he encountered, "What Baptism did you receive?" And we saw how Paul explained to them the true way of salvation and we discussed how they responded.

This morning I would like for us to discuss 4 more questions.

- What Message did you receive?
- What Gift did you receive?
- What Jesus did you receive?
- What Reception did you receive?

Let's begin in verse 8 of Acts 19.

8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them

and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

In Ephesus, Paul entered the synagogue and spoke there for 3 months. The verses tell us that after that period, some of the Jews were hardened and disobedient to the point he had to leave the synagogue and move to the school of Tyrannus.

Tyrannus may have been the owner of the school or someone famous that the school had been named after. Whoever he was, apparently there was a hall large enough for Paul to continue his teaching. The custom in Ephesus was for people to work in the morning, take an afternoon break from about 11am to 3pm and then go back to work until late evening. So Paul was probably using the midday break as his time for teaching. The passage says that he taught this way for 2 years.

What Message do you think he was teaching?

- Jesus was born of a virgin
- Jesus lived a sinless life
- Jesus was crucified and was buried
- Jesus rose from the dead
- Jesus ascended into heaven
- Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf will save you from your sins

In Eph 2:8-9 Paul writes:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

John 3:16 says,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life.

That was the message that Paul taught and that was the message that we teach today. Notice in verse 10 of Acts 19 it says,

10 This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Paul's teaching was so far reaching that all over Asia, people were hearing about Jesus. It appears that everybody knew what Paul was preaching in Ephesus. What a powerful ministry that changed the world.

Our second question this morning is answered in verses 11 and 12.

11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 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.

Paul was an extraordinary person even before he became a Christian. Yet, now, with the Holy Spirit working in and through him, he was able to do even more.

The miracles that God allowed Paul to perform were a confirmation that God was working through him. It was the authentication of Paul's ministry. This leads us to the question, what authenticates your ministry?

Paul wrote in Eph 4:11

11 And He (The Holy Spirit) gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

In this passage and others in 1 Corinthians, Paul teaches the believers that the Holy Spirit gives each of us a supernatural gift. What is the purpose of these gifts?

It is important that each of you know what gift the Holy Spirit has empowered you with and that you exercise your gift within the church body.

Next Paul asks the question, What Jesus did you receive? Look at verse 13.

13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." 14 Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 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. 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. 18 Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. 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. 20 So the Word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

Apparently Ephesus was the center for the occult and Paul used miracles to demonstrate God's power over Satan. In Bible history, you will find three special periods where miracles were performed. First, was the period of time when Moses lived. Second, was the period of time when Elijah and Elisha lived. And third, was the time when Jesus and the Apostles lived. Each period lasted less than 100 years and depending on how you classify the miracles, the total number of miracles recorded in the Bible is less than 100. Of course, not all the miracles were recorded.

When Jesus performed miracles, He usually had 3 major purposes in mind:

1. to show His compassion and meet human needs
2. to teach a spiritual truth
3. to present His credentials as the Messiah

Can you give me an example of when Jesus used each of these purposes?

The apostles followed this same pattern in their miracles. In fact, the ability to do miracles was one of the proofs of apostolic authority. We have seen in past classes that when God demonstrates His ability through the use of miracles, Satan comes along and sends a counterfeit. Jesus taught this in His parable of the Tares. Peter experienced it in Samaria and Paul experienced it in Paphos.

Why does Satan imitate what God's people are doing?

Satan knows that the unsaved world can't tell the difference between the real and the fake. And the more people he can convince to follow him, the larger his army will be. Although he is a defeated foe, he still thinks he can win the battle.

The priests who were trying to cast the demon out of the man had no personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In their own power, they were trying to imitate the miracles they had witnessed by Paul. The demon says to these men, Jesus I recognize and Paul I am acquainted with; but who are you?

Then the demon attacks the priests and they were forced to flee. What would have happened if the exorcism had succeeded?

These men wanted the power for themselves. These men wanted to profit from the name of Jesus but didn't want to accept Jesus. They wanted to have a form of godliness while denying the power it came from. They were hypocrites and they were exposed.

Num 32:23 says,

23 ...behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

What Jesus did you receive when you believed? The real one or the counterfeit? Are you truly a believer or only playing the role? Paul was the real deal.

Our final question this morning is, "What Reception did you receive?"

Look at verse 21.

21 Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

This is the first mention of Paul's plan to go to Rome. The fulfillment of this plan encompasses the final section of the book of Acts. What will happen to Paul in Rome?

Paul must have had a tremendous sense of fulfillment as he looked at his time in Ephesus. A growing church was making an impact on a pagan city. Although it was not perfect, God had blessed the ministry in a special way.

Verse 22 says that he sent Timothy onto Macedonia while he stayed in Asia for a while. Paul appears to be at peace.

Christian peace might be defined as the ability to remain faithful in spite of the panic of unfulfilled dreams. Paul was able to lean on God and know that it wasn't about him but about God.

After Paul decided to stay in Ephesus while his heart was sending him to Rome, things got bad. Look at verse 23.

23 About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. 26 "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.

So this man Demetrius, who didn't even know Paul, brought together the silversmiths in Ephesus and told them that if the gospel continued

to be successful, fewer people would worship the goddess Diana, and therefore these silversmiths would be out of business. The story continues in verse 29.

28 When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. 30 And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him.

Suddenly the whole city was seized by confusion and people filled the theater. Paul wanted to go and address the mob but his friends would not allow it. Let's finish the story. Would someone read from verse 32 to the end of the chapter?

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. 33 Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 35 After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven? 36 "So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. 37 "For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 "So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another. 39 "But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. 40 "For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." 41 After saying this he dismissed the assembly.

Some say that as many as 25,000 people may have been rioting for 2 hours. Notice in verse 32 Luke tells us that “the majority (of rioters) did not know for what reason they had come together.”

Benjamin Franklin once said that a mob was a monster with heads enough, but no brains.

Max Lerner wrote, “Every mob, in its ignorance and blindness and bewilderment, is a League of Frightened Men that seeks reassurance in collective action.”

Can you picture the situation here? What other mob in the Bible can you recall?

It was a mob that yelled, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him!” to Pilate and they eventually got their way.

God uses an unnamed town clerk to stop the mob. He tells them that there were other ways to settle problems than to create a disturbance and besides, if the mob had gotten out of control, he might have lost his job.

In the end, the reception that Paul received in Ephesus was that of rejection. But who was the angry mob really rejecting?

The reception we receive when we share the gospel really doesn't matter. What does matter is the reception that those who hear the message give to Jesus Christ. They can either accept Him or reject Him.

So this morning we looked at 5 questions from Acts 19:

- What Baptism did you receive?
- What Message did you receive?
- What Gift did you receive?
- What Jesus did you receive?
- What Reception did you receive?

Although these questions were put to the Ephesians, they are still relevant for us to answer today. If you are here this morning and you can't answer one of these questions, please speak to someone at your table. They would be happy to discuss them with you further.