

02-08-04a Revelation

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our time in the Word of God to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. We know that the Word of God is living, it is powerful, it is sharper than any instrument in those days. They said a two-edged sword, the machaira, in our day, no matter what you want to think of, a laser scalpel, which is both powerful and exceedingly sharp.

They can use those laser scalpels to do eye surgery. The laser karyototomy and the modification of the lens on the front of your eye can be done because it is so sharp, sharper than any piece of metal. It's easily controlled through the use of computers and things, and yet the Word of God far surpasses any device of man's imagination when it comes to piercing to the heart of things, its power, its precision, its accuracy in showing where we stand before God.

And it is such a privilege to have a copy of the Word of God that we can hold in our hand. I never cease to be impressed by the history of the English Bible and the suffering and the trials and the persecution and the martyrdom that men went through to give us the copy of the Bible that we have in our hands. And in so many Christian homes it sits to get dusted once or twice a week and isn't opened, isn't prized, isn't cherished as the great treasure that it is.

But we have the privilege not only to possess the Bible but to open it and to spend time in fellowship together under the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that our souls are nourished and fed and strengthened with the divine supply, the divine energia, the divine power that enables us to live a life that we can't live in our own strength. We can't choose to live it. We can't make ourselves live it.

We have to be fueled from within by divine power. And it is God's Spirit and God's Word that activates and motivates and makes possible the seizing and laying hold of what Christ did for us on the cross. He gave us a great potential but we can't fulfill that potential in anything other than divine power.

And we take so much for granted and we fail to think and fail to remember that we cannot redeem the time. We cannot get through the day reflecting the glory of God unless we are sustained by God's Word and God's Spirit. So it is a great privilege and opportunity for us to spend this time and we take a moment at the outset to clear our minds, to lay aside the distractions and the weights and the sin that so easily besets us through confession and prepare our hearts for the ministry of God's Spirit and the implanting and engrafting of God's Word into our souls.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the privilege we have of being sustained by your grace, of being called by your name, of having been entered forever into relationship with you through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that you will be with us this morning as we fellowship together in your Word, that your Spirit will give us clarity of thought and clarity of

perception and a memory of the things that we see in your Word, that we will understand it rightly, that we will see its applicability to our individual and particular situation as we view our circumstances, our relationships, our priorities, our goals, our motivations.

We pray that as a result of our study this morning, we will be more fully equipped for every good work. We ask your blessing on the leadership of our country, those who have the rule over us and who exercise authority over our military and over our foreign policy as well as our domestic policy. We have many difficult decisions to make with regard to our economy on the domestic front and in particular with regard to our foreign relations and the war against terrorism and our relationship with Israel in the Middle East.

There are many complex interrelationships and priorities to be sorted out. We ask your guidance and your hand upon those who are in the position to represent our country in those capacities that we can continue to be a national beacon of light and of hope and of the gospel as we have been privileged to be in the past. We thank you for the freedom and the opportunity that our form of government guarantees us.

We pray that it will ever be so and that we will not take for granted the opportunities we have because of that freedom and because of the prosperity we enjoy, but that we will be ever motivated to be more closely conformed to the example of our Lord and Savior. We pray these things in His name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 47. Ezekiel 47. The particular link from our study of the seven churches in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 to Ezekiel 47 is the promise given to the first church, which is currently within our purview and under our gaze in the opening verses of Revelation chapter 2, and that is the church at Ephesus.

You will recall that the promise to the overcomers in the church at Ephesus is to be granted the right to partake of the tree of life. We find an interesting mention of the tree of life here in Ezekiel 47. Ezekiel, in the midst of a visit to the Millennial Kingdom by way of vision, is speaking here in chapter 47.

In talking about his angelic guide here, it says, Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, this is the Millennial Temple, and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. For the front of the temple faced east, just as the temple in Jerusalem has always faced east. What is east of Jerusalem? Do you remember? What is the prominent geographical feature directly east of Jerusalem across the Brook of Kedron? It is the Mount of Olives.

You can sit on the Mount of Olives and look west, and at least in theory, look through the eastern gate to the temple, and through the gate of the temple to the gate or doorway into the holy place, and following that line the entrance to the Holy of Holies, and the location of the Ark of the Covenant, God's throne on earth, the place where atonement was pictured once a year by the

high priest entering and sprinkling the blood. That east-west line extends from the Ark, through the doorway to the Holy of Holies, through the doorway to the holy place, through the inner court and the outer court of the temple, through the eastern gate, right across the Brook and up the Mount of Olives. And indeed, in Ezekiel, we have traced more than once the departure and return of the glory of God from Israel along that very line.

So here we find the door of the temple, and water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. For the front of the temple faced east, the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east, and there was water running out on the right side.

It's interesting that he does not go out the eastern gate, but he goes out the northern gate and around to see this. And when the man went out to the east with a line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters. The water came up to my ankles.

Again he measured a thousand and brought me through the waters. The water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through.

The water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. He said to me, Son of Man, have you seen this? Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river.

When I returned, there along the bank of the river were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me, this water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.

That's the waters of the sea are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because the waters go there.

They will be healed and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglayim. There will be places for the spreading of their nets.

Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the great sea, exceedingly many. But its swamps and marshes will not be healed. They will be given over to salt.

Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary.

Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for medicine. Now, these comments that are made

about the trees that grow along the river are identical to those made in Revelation chapter 22. And turn with me to Revelation 22 for the rest of our scripture reading.

This is John also in vision transported to the future. John, however, is not in the millennial kingdom. Ezekiel was.

And if you look at the context back there in Ezekiel chapter 47, you will see that this is the millennium. And one of the ways we know that is that we have the sea. The river that flows out from under the throne goes into the sea.

And we know that in the kingdom of the Father there is no more sea. Do you remember that? Many other descriptions. You still have the Levitical priesthood in operation.

You still have sacrifices if you read the surrounding context. We don't have time to look at this morning in Ezekiel. You will find that that is very clearly the millennial condition.

But look at Revelation chapter 22. This is equally clearly in the kingdom of the Father. And John's angelic guide shows him a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse, and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bondservants will serve Him.

They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will no longer be any night. They will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them, and they will reign forever and ever." So, the tree of life will grow in the kingdom of the Son and in the kingdom of the Father.

Its leaves impart healing. It draws its nourishment from the river of life that flows from the throne of God. And partaking of that tree is presented in our passage, Revelation chapter 2, in the reward to the overcomers in the church at Ephesus.

That privilege is presented as a reward to those who overcome. Well, we want to resume our study, without undue delay, of the church of Ephesus in Revelation chapter 2. And so that is where we now will turn our attention. You will recall that we have already seen the words of the Lord Jesus in vision before John the Apostle as he finds himself on the Lord's day in the Spirit on the Isle of Patmos.

And we saw at the conclusion of chapter 1 that Jesus prefaces the delivery of these seven letters to the seven churches by saying, beginning in verse 17, B. Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last. I am he who lives and was dead.

And behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death.

Write the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars, which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands, which you saw, are the seven churches.

So we began by noting that the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand speaks of, of course, the stars are identified as the angels of the seven churches, the messengers of the seven churches. And we noted that angels is not the angelic creation, but the pastors, the divinely commissioned carriers of the truth to each church. I wanted to develop that idea just a little bit because if you think about the audience who initially received this letter, think about the people in Ephesus.

They are going to be conditioned by their history. They are going to be conditioned by their culture. And when they hear these words, they are going to develop an understanding of the connotation of those words based on their background.

So it's good for us to try to familiarize ourselves with that background as well. Stars, why are stars used as symbols for the messengers of the church? What do stars tend to connote or represent in our thinking, especially when our thinking is conditioned by the word of God? Where do stars first appear in the scriptures? You go all the way back to the Genesis account, which is also where we find the first mention of the tree of life in Genesis chapter 2. And so it is a reminder both at the beginning and at the end of this letter that we are going back to the archetypes, to the beginnings of things, to the Genesis account for our reference. And the Lord Jesus at the beginning of the Ephesian letter says, These things says, He who holds the seven stars in his right hand.

So it is particularly important in Ephesus. We are going to find at the beginning of the other letters that he will take other aspects of his visionary appearance to John and of his identity to emphasize to those churches. But here the emphasis is on the holding of these seven stars in his right hand, walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

You will remember that when we reviewed biblical numbers, seven is the number of completeness and it can be viewed as the addition of the perfect world number four added to the perfect divine number three. Remember the number four that is associated with the earth, the physical world around us, the four compass directions, which also reminds us of the four winds, north, east, south and west. The Bible sometimes pictures angels at each of those four corners of the earth restraining or releasing the winds.

One thing I may have not mentioned when we talked about the number four that is very obvious if you think about ancient cosmology and so forth, were the four primitive elements. Earth, air, fire and water were thought to pretty much be the constitution of the physical universe in ancient times. Earth, air and water are your basic solid, liquid and gas states of matter.

Fire, of course, was a great mystery. They didn't know at the time that combustion was oxidation and that kind of thing, but the fire that illuminated the luminaries in the heavens and fire that could consume, fire that could separate the dross from the valuable metal, could be used in refining, could be used in forging. It had a very productive aspect, cooking of food for preservation and for sanitation, for the removal of waste.

Yet fire was also a picture of judgment where it burned away the wood and the hay and the stubble and the things that were temporary. It was destructive. When a conqueror came in and conquered a city, he might burn it with fire, destroy everything that preceded him.

Lightning would come down and start fires. So fire was a symbol of power and of judgment and could also be harnessed and used for constructive purposes. But earth, air, fire and water were the four primitive elements.

So you have the world, number four, and then the divine, number three, particularly in the Jewish understanding and in our later Christian understanding of the Trinity. Three representing God the Father, holy, holy, holy is what the angels sing around the throne of God. So seven came to represent completeness and the combination, the active intervention of God among men.

And this is not exclusive to the Judeo-Christian understanding of the world. And what I want to introduce to you this morning is a little bit of information about how this would have been received in Ephesus. Ephesus was a Greek city.

The town of Ephesus, and I'm going to give you a little bit of what we might call isagogics about Ephesus because it will help us understand what Jesus says to the church located there. Ephesus was a very old city. It was a seaport city, a bustling seaport.

It had been located right on the shore there of the Mediterranean Sea, the portion that extends up into the western coast of the province of Asia. In its day, it was the greatest commercial city in Asia. It was a very thriving and bustling center for commerce and trade.

And because of its seaport, just as you look at San Francisco and New York and other great seaport or harbor towns, Boston with its harbor, this is what got these great metropolises off the ground is their commerce and trade from the sea. And that was the heritage of Ephesus. It had actually been founded about 1,200 years before the time of John, in about 1,100 B.C., were the initial settling of this area.

The city moved several times in its history, through conquest primarily. Someone would come in and conquer the town, burn it to the ground and relocate it, build it afresh somewhere else. It always had as its locus of importance, however, an ancient site of worship.

This worship site began as a tree shrine. In very ancient and obscure times, there was a tree shrine. There was a giant, some accounts say it was a giant elm tree, but there has been a very

primitive, sort of a sacred ground, kind of like the round thing in England that everyone goes to, the Stonehenge.

Nobody knows how old that thing is or what its origins of worship were. Ephesus had its own ancient shrine about which people had mystical superstitions and sacred ground. This became the site later for the temple of Artemis, who is the huntress god in Greek and Roman mythology.

The shrine to Artemis was moved from its original location for logistical reasons, partly because of conquest, partly because of earthquakes, partly because of the gradual shifting of the location of the harbor as it accumulated silt. But for hundreds and hundreds of years, the temple of Artemis was the focal point, even as the town moved from being co-located with the shrine to being about a mile away to being two miles away. But the city had a history of being moved.

I won't go into all the gory details, but look it up in an encyclopedia or look it up on the web and you'll find a very interesting history of the town of Ephesus being moved time and again because of conquest. The Greeks conquered it and re-established the town. The Romans conquered it and re-established the town.

So this was its heritage. Its heyday came, say, 200 to 300 BC, right about the time that its transfer took place from the Greek times of Alexander the Great and his generals to the conquest by the Roman Empire. That's when it really reached its zenith and its greatest influence and power.

And then it began to go into decline, and there are several reasons for its decline, the primary one being that the harbor began to silt up and harder and harder for ships as ships got larger and carried more cargo, and yet the harbor was getting shallower and shallower and the channel to get into the docks became narrower and narrower. And there was a great effort made by a man, part of his name is Philadelphus, I forget the rest of it, but they thought, well, we'll fix this, we'll dredge out the channel. And their engineering was not very good and their effort to dredge it actually made things worse and they wound up dumping a bunch of silt into the channel instead of removing it, and this choked it up even worse.

And so by the time of John, all of the evidence suggests that this progressive decline had reached a point where the town was sort of a faded glory. You know, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up type of thing. In fact, I'll give you a quote.

The evidence suggests a progressive decline partially masked by a pretentious religious importance. In other words, as its commercial and economic importance declined, they more and more touted their religious significance as the place of the shrine of Artemis. And they clung to their religious importance more and more as their economic and commercial significance went into abeyance.

All of this is very pertinent to what Jesus says to the church at that location because he is going

to phrase, he's going to couch his message to them in terms that hark back to their location in Ephesus. There was a strong Jewish community in Ephesus and this is also very important to our understanding. This has been documented, even Josephus, if you read his writings, when he talks about Ephesus, he talks about a very strong Jewish community which had been there long before the time of Christ, going back a couple of hundred years.

And early on, their importance in participating in the commercial aspects of the life of Ephesus had reached an importance to where they enjoyed special privileges, unlike Jews elsewhere in the Greek and Roman Empire. And they enjoyed many of the privileges of citizenship, which was unusual for Jews outside, particularly outside Palestine, outside Israel proper, for Jews who were separated from Jerusalem and so forth. It was hard for them to get citizenship anyway, and yet the Jewish community enjoyed many great privileges and there are some who say that they had full citizenship in the Roman Empire.

That's difficult to prove conclusively, but there are many references to their privileged status in Ephesus in particular. And this produced bitterness among the Gentile, the non-Jewish portion of the citizenry in Ephesus. They didn't like the fact that the Jews had these privileges, which had been granted to them historically a couple of hundred years earlier and had been perpetuated down to the present time.

People thought, well, what right do they have? There was prejudice and there was jealousy of their prosperity and there was jealousy of their standing and their claim to the rights of citizenship in Ephesus. And so there was a great bitterness and there was a faction and division in the city that ran very deep because of this jealousy. Ephesus also enjoyed importance in the early days of the church, particularly after the fall of Jerusalem, which had been sort of the headquarters and the cradle of the church, the early church.

You remember James and the Jerusalem church? That was really sort of the headquarters of the church at large. But with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction and scattering that took place as a result of that, Ephesus, as a great religious center and as a center of apostolic activity, seems to have become a center and perhaps even the headquarters for the early church after the fall of Jerusalem. Well, that's sort of the historic background.

Let's look at some of the New Testament background from which we can glean information about Ephesus. We find Ephesus showing up quite notably in the New Testament, beginning in Acts chapter 18. And in Acts 18, we find that this was a place that Paul visited in his apostolic journeying, beginning in Acts chapter 18, verse 19.

You might turn with me there to Acts 18, where Paul, at verse 18, has been talking to Galileo and so forth. And when you get to verse 18, Paul remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him.

He had his hair cut off at Cancria, for he had taken a vow. It's a whole interesting study to look at

the making of a vow, and Paul worshipping on the Sabbath. There seems to be a lot of holdovers of his Judaism, and even his Phariseism, even as he functioned as an apostle.

It's quite an interesting study that we don't have time to do right now. But he cut his hair off at Cancria because he had taken a vow. Then he came to Ephesus.

He left Priscilla and Aquila and the others who were with him, and went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. So there is a very large and well-attended synagogue in Ephesus. He enters and he reasoned with the Jews.

They asked him to stay a longer time with them. He did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem. This may have been a part of his vow.

But I will return again to you, God willing. So then he sailed from Ephesus. So he goes to Antioch, and then you have some mention of the ministry of Apollos.

But when you get to chapter 19, it happened while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came again to Ephesus. And finding some disciples, he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They said to him, We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. He said to them, Into what were you baptized? They said, Into John's baptism.

Then Paul said, John indeed baptized with a baptism of metanoia, change of mind or metanoia, repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Now the men were about twelve in all. And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. So the people in Ephesus, particularly the Jewish segment, and exclusively the Jewish segment in this case, because they are only the Jews who attend the synagogue, received a Pauline teaching ministry for three months.

Now you think about three months. Three months is a long time. There were services at the synagogue other than the Sabbath.

But you can be sure that Paul was there on the Sabbath. He is there at the worship on Saturday. And he is persuading them concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

Now what are the things concerning the kingdom of God? This was one of the primary themes of Paul's preaching and teaching. You find this in the very last few verses of the book of Acts. Paul

spent two years in Rome teaching concerning the kingdom of God.

Now I thought the kingdom being presented to the Jews went away when Jesus was crucified, that that opportunity ceased. Well, the literal fulfillment of the kingdom promises in terms of bringing in the millennial kingdom and the rule of Christ seated on the throne of his father David did in fact come and go during the ministry of Jesus Christ. But the opportunity to seize and lay hold of blessing and reward and opportunity in the coming millennial kingdom when it does come and is fulfilled is still present.

It was present. And what a great opportunity to talk to Jewish Christians about what was missed when Jesus came and what is yet available and what we as believers, whether Jew or Gentile, can seize and lay hold of in the coming millennial kingdom. What a great opportunity to show the analogy between the literal blessings that were promised to Israel and the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ that are ours when we operate in faith and they will receive their literal fulfillment and the fleshing out of those spiritual blessings that we enjoy even as we live this life in the millennial kingdom and beyond.

So that's what he spoke about and reasoned about and persuaded about in the synagogue. But look at verse 9. When some were hardened and did not believe but spoke evil of the way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. So there was a hostile environment developed in the synagogue.

There were synagogue leaders. There was a faction, a fairly large faction evidently, in the synagogue who disputed and argued and it became a source of conflict. So Paul said, let's not continue to create division here.

Let's go somewhere else. So he withdrew those who were followers from those who were in opposition. He separated.

You might say that Paul led a split in the synagogue because people chose to believe the teaching of Paul and came to an understanding and were trying to walk the way of faith and there were people who rejected it. So rather than stay in a place of conflict and a place of opposition, Paul took those who understood what he was teaching and who wanted to learn more about it and withdrew. So there was a split in the synagogue.

Well, you know what happens when there's a split in a church. You know what happens when there's a split in a group of believers. There is often resentment on one or both sides toward the other faction.

There is a resentment of the fact that resources have been taken away, that people have been taken away, the size of the group has been reduced, the prestige and standing of the group has been reduced by this schism and by this scandal, if you will. So it does not bode well and you can imagine that even if there's one group that's in the right and departing because they're trying to

adhere to biblical principles, the group that remains is going to be very full of animosity in many cases precisely because they are not amenable and they are not susceptible to the teaching of the word of God. So there is often a future potential for opposition.

So for two years, look at verse 10. This continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Remember when we were talking about the selection of the seven churches to whom Jesus addresses these letters, that Ephesus was on that main artery of communication and by speaking in Ephesus, Paul can communicate in such a way that this is going to spread throughout the region.

And by the time he has ministered for two years in Ephesus, now think about it. There weren't very many places that Paul the Apostle, with all of the mystery doctrines and all of the revelation that the Lord Jesus Christ gave him, could minister and teach. Can you imagine how much attendance do you think we would have here if we could publish a little flyer and say, the Apostle Paul is coming to Grace and Truth Bible Church in Garland, Texas and for the next two years he will be teaching New Testament doctrines of the church.

How many people do you think would flock to attend if the Apostle Paul himself in the flesh came here and taught? How often would we attend? Would we miss if Paul the Apostle were presenting the word of truth? I think we would drag ourselves here no matter what. But here you have Paul the Apostle. He spoke in the synagogue for three months.

And after three months it became clear that there was too much opposition, too much division. There was a great deal of unreceptivity, if you will, if I can coin a word. So he goes to the school of Tyrannus.

And Tyrannus evidently ran a school and offered his facilities and said, you can have synagogue services here. And so the Jews went there. Remember, Jews didn't like to worship with the Gentiles.

And so it becomes apparent that these Jews were enlightened and understood that they could associate with Gentiles by removing themselves from the synagogue. Now Gentiles can come and hear the teaching of Paul as well as these enlightened Jews. So everyone can come together.

And so all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. You'll notice that God worked unusual miracles by the hand of Paul. And this is in Ephesus.

So that even handkerchiefs or aprons that were brought from his body to the sick, diseases, left them and evil spirits went out of them. So some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, we exorcise you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them and prevailed against them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus. And fear fell on them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

And many who had believed came, confessing and telling their deeds. Also many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver.

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Now this is very helpful for us to understand because what is the prevailing thought, what is the prevailing religious thinking that the apostolic teaching and preaching contravenes here? It is magic, it is appeal to the occult, it is appeal to the supernatural through the worship of some sort of pagan deities or pagan divinities and appeal to spirits, evil spirits, to get your way and to prosper and to accomplish things that you don't seem to have the power to do on your own. To gain a victory in your particular area of endeavor, you hire a magician.

You get the spirits on your side and you get your stuff done. And so when these Jews and Gentiles alike come to enlightenment, they abandon this common Ephesian modus operandi, they burn their books of magic, they eschew their appeal to the magicians and to the occultists and try to walk in the way with a capital W. Well, this again is going to create a schism on the Gentile side. There is already animosity on the Jewish side, right? Because of the split at the synagogue, because of the differentiation between the old Judaizers who can't see the fulfillment of Old Testament scripture in Christ and in the church.

And now by drawing people away from the magic cults, there is going to be a loss of business amongst the idolaters and the purveyors of these books and these idols and these services of occultism. So when these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the spirit when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem. So he is planning a trip.

He is going to go through Macedonia and Achaia and end up at Jerusalem, just like he had done earlier when he was in Ephesus before. 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.

And by staying in Asia, he is primarily continuing to stay in or near Ephesus. 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 prosperity by our trade. Now you need to understand that when it says Diana here in your

New King James, in Greek this is Artemis. This is Artemis, Artemisia, all of this has to do with the great temple shrine there in Ephesus.

So he calls together all of his fellow workers because this is bad for business, just like it reduced the income at the synagogue and those who were paying their tithe and so on. Same thing with the pagan worship. Men, you know we have our prosperity by this trade.

You see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all of 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 our trade in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Artemis, or Diana, may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship. This is what Ephesus is now leaning on, and since their commercial importance is dwindling away, if they lose their religious significance, they are going to be a backwater.

So this is a great threat, both commercially and status-wise, reputation-wise. So when they heard this, they were full of wrath, and they crowded out saying, great is Diana of the Ephesians, or great is Artemis 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.

Paul is out of pocket at the moment, so they seize his nearest associates. And so Paul comes out of wherever he's been. He was just a few doors down or something.

So when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. So some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. So he's in the city, but they missed him when they were grabbing people to rend asunder and cause grief to.

So, therefore, some cried one thing and some another for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not even know why they had come together. You know how it is with a riot. Sometimes people just get into the spirit of a riot, and they don't even know what it's for.

They just jump in and use it as an excuse to create havoc. So they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. Alexander motioned with his hand and wanted to make his defense to the people.

But when they found out he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, Great is Artemis, or Diana, of the Ephesians. When the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Artemis, or Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? And it appears that perhaps the source of this original shrine and this sacred ground and all of this was perhaps a meteor impact or something that really wowed everyone, and so they built a shrine

there, and this went back hundreds and hundreds of years. Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.

For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.

But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering. He's talking about the Roman government is liable to come in and squash everybody for this.

When he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly. So after the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.