

## THE RIOT AT EPHESUS

– *AUGUST 20. – ACTS 19:29-41. –*

COMPLETION OF ST. PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY TOUR – HIS THIRD TOUR BEGUN – APOLLOS AT EPHESUS ASSISTED BY AQUILA AND PRISCILLA – BAPTISM UNTO REPENTANCE NOT BAPTISM INTO CHRIST – THE GOSPEL PREACHED IN EPHESUS – OPPOSITION BY DELUDED AGENTS OF THE ADVERSARY – BUSINESS DEPRESSION CHARGED TO CHRISTIANITY – TOWN CLERK A MAN OF REASONABLY SOUND JUDGMENT – REAL SECRET OF OPPOSITION TO THE TRUE GOSPEL.

**"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."  
– 1 Timothy 6:10. R.V.**

AFTER leaving Corinth, St. Paul completed his second missionary tour and returned to Antioch. En route he stopped at Jerusalem, where he greeted the Church and doubtless gave them an account of the Lord's blessing upon his recent ministries in Europe. Aquila and Priscilla went with the Apostle as far as Ephesus. The vessel upon which he sailed remaining at the port, over the Sabbath, St. Paul improved the opportunity to speak for Christ in the synagogue of Ephesus. His discourse was in the nature of a preparation for a future work which he hoped to do there. Doubtless he spoke along the lines of first principles – respecting the glorious Messianic prophecies, the fulfilment of which should now be expected. His discourse was well received, and he was urged to remain longer, whereupon he gave his promise of a later return.

We are not informed how long the Apostle remained at Antioch; but "after he had spent some time there, he departed and went over all the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all disciples." While he was energetic in the establishment of new companies of the Lord's people, he was not slack in looking out for

the spiritual welfare and growth of those which he had already established, as is evidenced in the fact that this was his third visit to these Churches.

When St. Paul returned to Ephesus, he found that during his absence a Christian brother named Apollos had come there and had preached in the synagogue, using such close, logical and convincing arguments that he had secured twelve converts to Christianity. Apollos was a Jew, born at Alexandria, one of the chief cities of that time, especially noted for its schools and its extensive libraries. The Common Version says that Apollos was eloquent; the Revised Version, that he was learned. As the Greek word seems to be translatable either way with equal propriety, in all probability he was both learned and eloquent. However, he was not as far advanced in the knowledge of the Truth as were Aquila and Priscilla, who had for a time companied with St. Paul. As soon as they heard Apollos in the synagogue, they recognized him as a Christian brother, and invited him to their own home, where they had good opportunity to communicate to him "the way of the Lord more perfectly."

Having heard from Aquila and Priscilla the glorious work which the Apostle Paul had accomplished at Corinth, Apollos went thither, taking with him a letter of introduction from his newly found friends at Ephesus, who had very recently left Corinth. Incidentally, we are told that his going to Corinth proved a blessing to the Church there. Because of his thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures and his ability in expounding them, Apollos could "forcefully confute the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is The Christ." (Acts 18:28.) That the Corinthian brethren were greatly pleased with his masterful ability as a teacher of the Truth is evidenced by the fact that some of them were disposed to say that they were followers of Apollos; while others, also sectarian in spirit, claimed to be followers of St. Paul, and still others of St. Peter – all of which sectarianism the Apostle subsequently reproved in his letter to them. – 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:3-7.

## ST. PAUL'S MINISTRY AT EPHEBUS

While Apollos was at Corinth, the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus and began a ministry which lasted for two years. St. Paul speedily found the twelve persons whom the ministry of Apollos had reached. Our Common Version seems to give the inference that the Apostle was surprised that these believers at Ephesus had not as yet received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But not so. He merely wished to bring to their attention the fact that such gifts were possible to them; for only an Apostle could convey the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17.) The preaching of Apollos had been merely along the lines of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, represented in the baptism of John to the Jews; while these believers were evidently Gentiles.

Apollos had explained to these Ephesians the Gospel merely to the extent of repentance from sin and faith in Christ as the Redeemer. He had no knowledge of the deeper meaning of baptism as explained by St. Paul (Romans 6:3-5) – a baptism of consecration, to suffer with Christ – to be dead with Him, to participate in His resurrection to the new nature and ultimately to be sharers with Him in the Heavenly Kingdom. The Apostle explained to them this "mystery" of fellowship with the Messiah – participation in His sufferings now, and by and by in His glory. (Colossians 1:26,27; Philippians 3:8-11.) When the Ephesian converts heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus – as members of His Body, to fellowship in His sufferings, even unto death.

There are many believers today who, like these Ephesians, are members of the Household of Faith, but who are not members of the Body of Christ – who have gone so far as a baptism of repentance and reformation and faith in the Redeemer, but who have not been instructed respecting the great privileges which belong to the Gospel Age. They know not that we may become "heirs of God and joint-

heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." – Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:11,12.

Wherever we go, let us each seek by the grace of God to explain the way of the Lord more perfectly to these already partially indoctrinated ones. So long as there are any such with whom to labor, it would be unwise, yea, contrary to our commission, for us to devote our lives and energies to the world. Although we are to do good to all men as we have opportunity, it is to be "chiefly unto the Household of Faith." (Galatians 6:10.) All around us, in the churches of the various denominations, are thousands who are in the condition of those mentioned above, knowing only the baptism of repentance, but not the baptism into Christ – the baptism of full consecration, the baptism into His death. Let us be diligent in this highest department of the work of the ministry, feeding, instructing, the Lord's flock.

## **REFORMATION COSTING SACRIFICE**

St. Paul continued to present the Truth in the synagogue until opposition to it became quite marked, and certain of the Jewish adherents began to speak evil of both the teachings and the believers. Then the Apostle and those who believed withdrew from the synagogue, and began a separate meeting, apparently in a rented hall, called "The School of Tyrannus." St. Paul probably labored at his trade during the forenoon, and during the afternoon **page 233** preached the Gospel Message to such as had hearing ears, not only in the public hall, but also by visiting those whom he had reason to expect would be amenable to the Truth. Apparently this was his usual manner of life. – 1 Thess. 2:9.

During his ministry the Lord performed through the Apostle many marvelous healings of the sick and other miracles, amongst which was the casting out of demons. We may reason that the manifestation of Divine power here was necessary to the establishment of the Church and to the general influence of the

Gospel in that region – as an offset to the blinding influences of Satan's agents and power. From the earliest dawn of history Satan's arts, employed in all parts of the world, have been in the nature of wonder-workings, of magic, black art, witchcraft, etc. The Scriptures call attention particularly to the magicians of Egypt, to the soothsayers of Babylon, and in the Book of Acts show us that the same wily arts of the Adversary were general throughout the Roman Empire, and especially in the wealthy city of Ephesus.

Perceiving the Apostle's power to be greater than their own, certain magicians essayed to use the name of Jesus as a charm or magic word, just as they were in the habit of using other magic words in their incantations. The efforts of some of these, sons of one of the principal priests, resulted disastrously to them, but beneficially to many others. This matter becoming widely known, many who long had had confidence in such wonder-workers became convinced that the Apostle's teachings were correct – that the black arts were of Satan, while St. Paul's miracles were of Divine power.

The sincerity of some of these converts was manifested by the public burning of the books in which were recorded the various magic words and recipes by which incantations could be made, affecting and counteracting various of the ills of life. At that time all books were precious; for they were made of skins instead of paper, and were pen-printed instead of printed by type. These books of magic were especially high-priced because each possessor of a copy was interested in restricting the information, and hence was unwilling to permit any one to make a copy of his book. Viewed from this standpoint, the number of books would not necessarily be very great in order to amount to fifty thousand pieces of silver – about \$8,500, a piece of silver representing about 17 cents of our money. But, when we remember that each piece of silver represented a day's wages, it might be considered equivalent to at least one dollar in our day. Thus the total value of the books burned would be at least \$50,000.

Everything throughout the Scriptures indicates that the Lord especially loves and appreciates those who are thorough-going, not only in their zeal for righteousness and truth, but also in their opposition to unrighteousness and error. We believe that the same principle applies to the sale of books which inculcate Satan's lies; and we recommend that if the Lord's people have books of this kind, black with false doctrines, misrepresenting the Divine Character and Plan, they would do far better to burn them than to sell them and give the money to the Lord's work.

### **OPPOSITION BASED ON SELFISHNESS**

After St. Paul had spent nearly three years at Ephesus, he purposed going again to Jerusalem, but first would visit the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia – Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica and Corinth. Evidently it was this visit to Corinth to which he referred in his letter to them. (1 Corinthians 4:17-19.) He proposed to take from them a contribution to the poor in Jerusalem – not as seeking a gift, but as an evidence of their love for the Lord, manifested in their desire to help the brethren at Jerusalem, who were chiefly poor and greatly disadvantaged by their loyalty to the Truth.

About this time occurred the riot described in today's Study, which probably would have determined the Apostle to leave Ephesus, if he had not already purposed so to do. The Lord permitted persecutions to drive St. Paul out of every place – thus seemingly indicating the proper time for terminating his ministry at each point. The record says, "There arose no small stir about that way." (Acts 19:23.) Very evidently the way of the Lord's people differed decidedly from the ways of others, not only as concerned their future hopes, but also regarding their course in the present life. And the way is the same to this day, as concerns those who are faithfully walking close to the Lord and to the teachings of His Word. The difficulty with many professed Christians is that they have gotten

out of the way. As a result, nominal church ways are, alas! too much like those of the world, with very similar hopes, aspirations and endeavors.

Ephesus was one of the great cities of that time. Just at the head of its harbor stood one of the "seven wonders of the world," an immense temple of "Diana of the Ephesians" – the deity of Asia Minor. To her shrine came thousands of people, believing that they received from her a special blessing, which affected favorably the prosperity of their homes. Her blessing was supposed to increase greatly their flocks and herds and the birth of children. Unlike the Greek Diana, this one was represented to be the mother of all things living.

Of course the fame of this great idol attracted general attention; and those who could not go to Ephesus to worship at the shrine of this image were pleased to purchase from merchants certain charms or amulets, which consisted of small copies of her shrine wrought in silver. In the Apostle's day the business of making these shrines was immense, employing thousands of men.

A man named Demetrius was the representative of the silversmiths' guild, or union. Becoming incensed at the propaganda of the early Church at Ephesus, he aroused his fellow-craftsmen by a stirring speech, in which he painted a black picture of the business depression that would result if this man Paul were permitted to preach much longer in their city. He called attention to the fact that not merely at Ephesus, but throughout all Asia Minor, this new religion was spreading, and that it opposed the worship of Diana. He reasoned that if the people in that region lost respect for Diana and her temple, they would no longer purchase her shrines; and that the falling off in demand would mean loss for all engaged in the manufacture of these shrines. With a wonderful cunning he combined the thought of their duty of supporting the religion of their city with that of looking out for their pocketbooks. That he was

successful in arousing prejudice and in creating a riot causes us no wonder.

## **THE OVERRULING OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

Soon the city was in an uproar, touched to the quick on humanity's very tenderest spots – religion and worldly prosperity. Doubtless the Adversary helped on the matter, with the result that shortly the people were in a frenzy of despair, as though the anticipated collapse of their religion and their business were already upon them. The home of St. Paul was known; and thither the mob rushed, seeking the chief factor in the impending troubles. In the Lord's providence, St. Paul was absent. Aquila and Priscilla, who kept the home, were there and, although not arrested, evidently were loyal to the Apostle to the very last degree. (Romans 16:3,4.) As working people and home-keepers they were not molested; but two of the **page 234** Apostle's assistants were taken by the mob, and hurried to the theater, whose capacity, we are told, was 56,000 people, thus indicating that Ephesus was an immense city.

Learning of the commotion, St. Paul would have courageously entered into the thick of the trouble in defense of his friends and, above all, of his Master and His Message. But wiser counsels prevailed, and he remained away. The brethren suffered him not; for they concluded that his presence would have accomplished nothing with people in so unreasonable a state of mind.

The Lord, however, did not neglect the two brethren who were arrested – Gaius and Aristarchus. The town clerk came to their assistance, and with words of wisdom dispersed the mob. This official was not interested in the Gospel of Christ and its service. But he was interested in the doing of his duty as an officer of the city. He pointed out to the mob the fact that they had become unduly excited, that everybody knew the greatness of the goddess Diana, and that neither one Jew nor many Jews could injure her fame. Then he declared that if the disturbance were not merely a quarrel between



the silversmiths and the propagators of Christianity – if the assembly had any other charge against St. Paul and his associates – the matter should be brought before the law courts in the lawful manner. He showed that the meeting was nothing short of a riot; and that if it were to be reported to the imperial government at Rome, it would greatly reflect to the discredit of Ephesus. With this he dismissed the assembly.

### **PRINCIPLE AND LACK OF PRINCIPLE**

Notice the contrast between the two groups whose acts are recorded in this chapter. In the first case, many people, realizing that they had been working in conjunction with the powers of evil – the demons – burned their books of magic, etc., as a result of the influence of the Gospel Message upon their hearts. After they had come to a knowledge of the situation, they were willing and glad to suffer financial loss and be thought foolish by their neighbors rather than to do injury to others by the sale of the books of magic, black art, etc.

On the contrary, the chief actors of the second group were moved to frenzy and to riotous conduct by their love of money – their fear of financial loss. Evidently it was not their respect for religion, but their love for filthy lucre, which prompted their actions. Moreover, the worship of Diana was demoralizing. Hence we perceive the strong contrast between those who raised a riot in order to perpetuate idolatry and to bring money into their own purses, and those who, on the contrary, were ready to sacrifice their earthly interests rather than do harm and in order to do the more good. Verily, there is a wonderful power in the religion of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer!

Be it also noted that the Apostle and his associates were not guilty of the charge made against them – blaspheming the goddess of Ephesus. Here we have a point of importance and a valuable lesson. St. Paul's commission was to preach the Gospel, not to

quarrel with false gods or their worship. The persecution was therefore for right-doing. So it is with us. It is not necessary for us to do or to say anything unkind toward our friends in Babylon. Nor is it necessary for us to tirade against their systems or doctrines. We have plenty to do in setting forth the Gospel Message.

Of course, St. Paul did not fail to call attention to the fact that Diana was the work of men's hands and not, as claimed, a divinity. So we may properly enough set forth to our friends the fact that there is but the one true Church, organized by our Lord and established at Pentecost; and that all other churches are, therefore, merely human systems. But we are not commissioned to tirade against these churches. The command, "Speak evil of no man," may properly be applied also to religious systems, particularly those that recognize the redeeming merit of Christ's death as the foundation of Christianity and that teach morality. Undoubtedly the Lord has permitted sectarianism for some wise purpose, even as He has permitted the Gentile governments to hold sway until the end of "the Times of the Gentiles." Let us not interfere with the fulfilment of the Divine purposes. Let us be content to fulfil our mission of assisting the brethren by building them up in the most holy faith and telling the Good Tidings to whoever may have an ear to hear.

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