

Paul at Ephesus

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 29th Sep 2013

Intro

- Recently I did a series from the book of Ephesians on how to access the presence of God. This week I'm going to look at what actually happened when Paul (the author of the letter to the Ephesians) first went to Ephesus.
- We're going to hear some pretty wild stories of what went on.
- I'll also be sharing some amazing things that I've witnessed in the present day.
- Along the way we will explore what implications Paul's amazing trip to Ephesus has for us here today.

Read Acts 19:1-20

We are going to look at 5 significant events which happened during this trip. I'll look at situations from my own life related to each of these. We'll look at the implications for our lives of these 5 events.

1. The Ephesians both believed AND repented

- v18-19 'And many who had **believed** came **confessing** and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practised magic brought their books together and **burned** them in the sight of all.'
- THEY 'BELIEVED'- Paul had spent three months teaching in the synagogue and two years teaching daily in the hall of Tyrannus (19:9- some manuscripts add that it was 11am-4pm; i.e. siesta time). Philosophers would commonly come to key places like Ephesus to get their teaching heard. In this way he had influenced a whole region (the province of Asia- the West coast of modern day Turkey). It was this hearing of the gospel which led to many believing in Ephesus. **Application**- Get to hear the gospel and analyse it if you are a seeker. Check out the validity of the facts. I had a fear of there being a God so avoided blasphemy. God used various events to sow seeds into my life even as a child- Catholic priest in assembly, 'saints go marching in', illness, Cliff Richard when he was on fire after Billy Graham mission, even used a Muslim to convict me that Tarot cards were not right, but ultimately it was a born-again believer who explained to me the meaning of the cross and how to become a Christian. It was another born-again believer who taught me how to follow Christ. **Application**- NEVER STOP LEARNING & GROWING IN CHRIST.
- THEY 'REPENTED'- The word here 'deeds' (v18) is thought to refer to the revealing of incantations they had practised in order to break their power. The word 'books' (v19) here is also translated 'scrolls' in some versions and is thought to possibly be referring to scrolls with magical formulas on them which were worn in cylinders around the neck for protection from evil.
- Ephesus was a place where many different gods and goddesses were worshipped (up to 50 of them). Many worshipped a number of gods. Artemis the most important deity to the Ephesians and her temple was there and idols were sold of her to visitors. Ephesus had a reputation for the occult. There is a long tradition of six magical names of what was thought to be powerful beings which were associated with Ephesus (known as the Ephesian letters or Ephesia grammata) and which were quoted by the 'magi' (Plutarch says) to cast out demons and by athletes for assistance and protection. An ancient writer named Pausanias relates an

interesting and relevant parable about an Ephesian wrestler who travelled to Olympia, Greece, to compete in the games. The athlete was unbeatable in the wrestling event, winning match after match. During one of the competitions, however, the referee discovered he was wearing an anklet inscribed with the six Ephesian Gramata- the magical words invoking spiritual powers. This was immediately removed, whereupon his opponent from Miletus proceeded to three consecutive victories over him because of his loss of magical power (source zondervan illustrated Bible commentary vol3 pg 336 (Pausanias as cited in Eustathius, Comm. ad. Hom. 19.247, also cited in The Suda)).

- My story as to how I got involved in the occult and how I also burned my books and repented. Burned my occult books.
- **Application-** 'If in doubt, chuck it out' mentality of getting sorted with God- get rid of bad habits, but also bad influences. Me- demonic art, demonic music, occult stuff. Lord's prayer mentions 'daily bread' (so a daily thing) and forgive us our sins, indicating perhaps a need for ongoing forgiveness- we know that there is ONE act which makes us holy- the cross of Christ, but learning to live in the good of that is a process- Jesus said the disciples were already clean- a person who has had a bath only needs to wash their feet- the cross cleans us up, we just need to wash our feet as we go through life, picking up things which are not the real 'us' according to our new identity in Christ.
- Ongoing repentance- Ephesus later rebuked for leaving their first love (Rev 2:4-5). Jesus said to repent or their candlestick would be taken away- i.e. the Church would fail if they did not continue in a repentant spirit- we are never to lose the wonder of the cross or the appreciation of His grace to us- sure there are other truths, but not at the expense of the foundational truths.

2. People were delivered of evil spirits

- v12-17 'and the evil spirits went out of them...sons of sceva...' etc.
- The belief was that knowing the names of greater deities and being able to speak them out gave you power over lesser deities. Even Jews who had gone astray were used in mystical exorcism rituals which used various incantations and this is what we have here. The name of Jesus was thought to have magical significance because they had seen it work when used by Christians so it was tagged onto the Jewish exorcist's formula. Only one problem- relationship. These Jews had no relationship with Jesus- they just knew of Him, they didn't know Him for themselves, and so they did not have the authority to deal with the demon in the man.
- What are evil spirits? Fallen angels (explain).
- Medical model often denies reality of demons. Are they real? Yes. My experience of evil spirits- ouija board friend manifested, other friend at graveyard getting demonised. Alcohol factor. Sierra Leone manifesting man. Camping trip, deliverance and cow jumps off cliff.
- **Application-** Know Jesus yourself by becoming a Christian- this is how we get our muck dealt with and how we can help truly sort out the muck in other's lives. Know the authority that you have in Christ as a child of God. God is our dad, Jesus is our brother, we are a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, regarded as positionally seated in authority with the King of Kings. He has given us authority to trample on scorpions, on all the power of the evil one.
- **Application-** don't go looking for demons (like I did when I was a new Christian) and don't ignore or tolerate them either- deal with them where you see them manifest, just as Jesus did, just as Paul did. Jesus didn't go around binding and loosing in the heavenlies- He preached the good news of the kingdom and cast out demons where people had them.
- **Application-** What are the things that hold you captive? God wants to set you free.

Fears, bad habits, addictions. Satan will lie that you cannot be free, but Jesus said 'You will know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free'- He also said 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life'- to know Jesus is to know the Truth- let's choose to believe what he says of us rather than what the enemy says.

3. Believers were baptised

- v5 'When they heard this they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.'
- This is Paul's second visit to Ephesus. He had briefly visited it before in Acts 18:19 at the end of his second missionary journey. In the time period between that visit and this one a man named Apollos had preached there, but Apollos even though very gifted as a speaker and knowing the Old Testament scriptures still only knew so much and left out some very important areas- like believer's baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- As a result the Christians in Ephesus were deficient in their growth in the Christian faith. The first thing was- they hadn't been baptised as believers in Christ.
- Why was baptism important? It symbolised identifying with a certain teaching. It also symbolised being washed clean of impurity. Jews were commanded in the book of Leviticus to bathe themselves if they became ceremonially unclean, for instance due to an unhealthy bodily discharge. However, they believed that they had, by right of their Jewish ancestry (being descendants of Abraham), acceptance from God. However, if a non-Jew (Gentile) wanted to be acceptable to God they had to both accept the Jewish faith and also be totally immersed in water baptism (in living water- i.e. natural source of water such as a river, spring or a mikveh (a specially designed place for collecting natural water). Males would obviously also have to be circumcised. Once a Gentile had converted to Judaism by being baptised they were said to have been 'born-again', almost as if they had been born Jewish.
- John the Baptist insisted that Jews too had to undergo a baptism, just like a Gentile convert. This would have been humiliating for a Jew as it was saying that they identified with the sinful lifestyle of the Gentiles and needed washing clean- needed God's forgiveness. This was the baptism these Ephesian Christians had undergone.
- However, John's baptism was one of repentance to prepare people to receive Jesus' teaching. John's whole focus was to point people to Jesus as the only One who could take away the sins of the world. When someone is baptised as a believer in Jesus they are not merely expressing repentance for sins they are also announcing their acceptance of Jesus as their sin-bearer, sin-taker, substitute. They are relying on Jesus' perfect law-keeping rather than their own. They are relying on His resurrection and ascension into Heaven as proof that Jesus has the power to rescue them from death.
- My 'sprinkling' as a believer and subsequent full-immersion baptism due to not being happy with a cross signed on my head by a Bishop.
- **Application-** Have you been baptised as a believer yet? If not, arrange to be.
- **Application-** Part of the Great Commission is to baptise people- have you ever done it? Have you encouraged people to be, or been a part of the process leading someone to be? Let's choose to be obedient to this call.

4. Believers were filled with the Holy Spirit

- -v6 'And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied'
- The difference between *having* the Holy Spirit (He enables us to believe in the first place) and being *filled* with the Holy Spirit. All Christians have the Holy Spirit, just as these Ephesian Christians did before they met Paul again. However, the *baptism* of

the Holy Spirit, the *infilling* is experiential- we experience being filled by God, resulting in a release in praise and worship, spiritual gifts, communication with and from God, and experience of the power of God etc.

- When I got filled with the H.S in Church. Got tongues at home. Got pictures at Spring harvest.
- Asking God to fill you- multiple fillings (Eph 5:18). Peter's many fillings: John 20:19-22 Jesus breathes on them saying 'receive the H.S', Acts 2:4 'were all filled with the H.S' (the day of Pentecost), Acts 4:8 'Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said', Acts 4: 31 'and when they had prayed the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit' (again, after being filled previously at Pentecost).
- Religious transliteration of the word 'baptism' in scripture robs it of its real meaning. Baptism= to be immersed- hence full immersion where possible for water baptism. John the immerser, John the dunker- as John dunked you in water, so now you are going to be dunked, immersed, completely saturated in the Holy Spirit.
- 'Holy Spirit 'fell on' Acts 11:15-16 Peter explains about the Holy Spirit falling on a crowd of Gentiles as he was preaching to them, and likens it to their own experience at Pentecost- 'As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
- Power encounter- 'clothed with power from on high' -Luke 2:49 (same writer as book of Acts). People's experience of electricity running through their body. Sometimes manifestations- not to be our focus, but they happen, and if they don't it doesn't mean there is something wrong with us- God will fill us in the way He chooses.
- If we want spiritual gifts we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit- the gifts flowed when they were filled here, the same with us.
- **Application-** Chance to get prayer after to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Develop a lifestyle marked by fillings of the Spirit.

5. Amazing healings took place

- v11-12 'Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them'
- Luke here describes these miracles as unusual- i.e. this wasn't Paul's normal way of working, neither should it be ours, however, let's not discount the 'unusuals' of God. The normal way is to speak to the sickness or to lay hands on the sick, however when God is moving powerfully He is not bound by methods and can use the unusual- hearing from God is key to these breakthroughs. There are other unusual healings in the Bible- the healing of Naaman by washing in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:10-14). The healing of the man who touched the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:20-21). Healing of those who have the shadow of Peter upon them (Acts 5:14-16). Jesus spits on eyes- John 9:1-7; Mk 8:22-25; puts spit on tongue Mk 7:32-35.
- My experience- Sierra Leone- kid born deaf; man electric shocks; man addicted to drugs; man eating glass; Tony's kidney stone; Mike Davies' polyp; Paula food allergy.
- Not just for the few- Jesus said 'he who has faith in me will do the works (miracles) I have been doing and greater' John 14:12. We are all called to evangelism but not all evangelists. We are all called to heal the sick through our authority inherited in the gospel but we may not have a ministry characterised by healing.
- John Wimber training all Christians, same with Bill Johnson- let's get away from the one-person ministry model and be an army that does the works of Jesus!

Summary

5 key events in the gospel coming to Ephesus:

- **1. The Ephesians both believed AND repented**
- **2. People were delivered of evil spirits**
- **3. Believers were baptised**
- **4. Believers were filled with the Holy Spirit**
- **5. Amazing healings took place**

Song?

Ministry time