



'All the world is my parish'

So claimed the indefatigable John Wesley. But he might as well have been quoting Paul, of whom Wesley said: 'Paul sought not to rest, but pressed on as if he had yet done nothing' -- *Wesley's Notes on Acts* (ch. 19)

Third Tour

19a AN EXAMPLE OF LUKE'S SELECTIVITY (18:18-23)

18:18-21 Tantalizing, yet inconclusive hints re Paul's interior life

Some scholars regard it as unlikely that the historical Paul would have held fast to Jewish practices of this kind and have suggested that the whole account is a Lucan fiction designed to show that Paul was a loyal Jewish Christian. Perhaps too commentators feel a certain embarrassment at the suggestion that Christians should make vows of this kind to God, since they imply a *quid pro quo* relationship with God. But Paul was simply expressing gratitude to God in the manner traditional at this time; he was prepared to be 'as a Jew' to the Jews (1 Cor. 9:20; cf. Acts 16:3; 21:23f.); his action is historically possible and theologically acceptable ... So Paul took his leave with a promise to return if this was God's will. His wording reflects a pagan formula taken over by Christians (21:14; Jas. 4:15), possibly as a result of the similar wording found in Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:10). **I. Howard Marshall** *The Acts of the Apostles* pp.300-301

18:22-23 Though we have no record of these labours in Israel, Syria, Galatia and Phrygia, what DO we learn therefrom of a pastor's heart?

Paul sought not to rest, but pressed on as if he had yet done nothing. He is already possessed of Ephesus and Asia. He purpuses for Macedonia and Achaia. He has his eyes upon Jerusalem; then upon Rome; and afterwards on Spain (Rom. 15:24). No Caesar, no Alexander the Great, no other hero comes up to the magnanimity of this little Benjamite. Faith and love to God and man had enlarged his heart, even as the sand of the sea. **John Wesley** *Notes* p.488

Study 19b THE IMMENSE MEASURE OF JOHN (18:24-19:7)

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD ... ALL FLESH SHALL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD

Luke 3:4,6

18:24-28 Consistent with Peter, John, Stephen, Paul and Barnabas, what is the gist of Apollos' apologetic to the Jews?

He had learned in Alexandria the doctrine of John the Baptist and his prophecy of the immediate coming of Christ; and this he preached in Ephesus with great fervour and detailed proof from Scripture. Priscilla and Aquila, having heard his preaching, instructed him with regard to the fulfilment of John's prophecy.

W.M. Ramsay *St. Paul the Traveller & the Roman Citizen* p.267

Alexandria, at this time one of the great cities of the ancient world, had a very large Jewish population. It was there that the renowned Philo had taught -- a man whose system was a strange mixture of Judaism and Greek philosophy. It is possible that this man Apollos was first of all a disciple of his and then, as we shall see later on, of John the Baptist. He is described as an eloquent

man. God does not have a great many eloquent men, even in the ministry of the gospel. It is just here and there that he lays His hand upon a man who can so speak as to stir men's hearts and move on and on to a great climax. Such men are rare. This gift characterized Apollos. He was perhaps the outstanding pulpit orator of the first century in the Christian Church. He knew the Word; that is, he was familiar with the Old Testament ... He knew the promises and the prophecies. He knew something, perhaps, of the types and shadows, and was looking for the full manifestation of the Messiah of Israel as promised therein. He had heard John the Baptist preach, and had been baptized by him personally. "And being fervent in the spirit." I like that. The word *fervent* means "boiling hot." ... You remember the apostle in one place, writing to believers, says we should be "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." I think a great many of us are fervent in business, slothful in spirit, serving ourselves! **Harry Ironside** *Lectures on the Book of Acts* pp.425-427

Every talent may be of use in the kingdom of God if joined with knowledge of the Scriptures and fervor of spirit ... Apollos did not plant, but water. This was the peculiar gift which he had received. And he was better able to convince the Jews than to convert the heathens. **John Wesley Notes** p.488

19:1-7 The voice in the wilderness has been heard in Egypt and Ephesus

It is not so much "signs" and special manifestations of the Spirit's benediction which are in view here, for, in his first letter to the Corinthian Christians, Paul is obviously anxious not to overemphasize the more unusual phenomena. The group of a dozen Ephesians caught Paul's attention because of their sad inadequacy. They were living in the days of repentance, which, initially necessary though such confession is, cannot be permitted to shadow life and, perhaps, promote a toilsome asceticism like John's own. They probably lacked "assurance" and the sense of emancipation proper to the presence of the indwelling Christ. They knew nothing of the Comforter. **E.M. Blaiklock** *Acts: The Birth of the Church* p.190

It is unlikely that this means that Paul was preaching a different message from that in 17:31; 18:5 and other places which was concerned with Jesus as the Messiah. The message was about Jesus and the kingdom (28:31), and Luke employs the different terms simply for literacy variation. **I. H. Marshall** *op. cit.*, p.309

Study 19c THE KINGDOM, THE NAME (19:8-20)

19:8-13 The kingdom that Paul preaches is publicly identified with what name? (8:12, 20:20-28)

There were people who went around making a living by various kinds of pseudo-scientific or clairvoyant powers, including the practice of exorcism. They were ready to call on the names of any and every god or divinity in their invocations -- and often they recited long lists of names so as to be sure of including the right god in any particular case. Even pagans used the various Jewish names of God. These Jewish exorcists (*cf.* Lk. 11:19) now proceeded to use the name of Jesus in an endeavour to rival Paul's powers. A magical formula preserved in the Paris magical papyrus reads, 'I adjure thee by the God of the Hebrews, Jesus'. **I. Howard Marshall** *op. cit.*, p.311

19:14-20 Does power reside in the name of Jesus? Characterize the magic worldview (1 Kings 18:26; Isa.48:1,2)

Among practitioners of magic in ancient times Jews enjoyed high respect, for they were believed to have specially effective spells at their command. In particular, the fact that the name of the God of Israel was not to be pronounced by vulgar lips was generally known among the pagans, and misinterpreted by them according to regular magical principles. Several magical papyri which have been preserved to our day contain attempts to reproduce the correct pronunciation of the Ineffable Name -- lao, lae, laoue, and so forth -- as well as other Jewish expressions and names such as Sabaoth and Abraham, used as elements in magic spells ... A Jewish chief priest would enjoy high prestige in magical circles, for he was the sort of person most likely to know the true pronunciation of the Ineffable Name. It was not the Ineffable Name, however, but the name of Jesus that his seven sons employed in an attempt to imitate Paul's exorcism. But when they tried to use it, like an unfamiliar weapon wrongly handled it exploded in their hands. "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" was a

EPHESUS "Liverpool of the Mediterranean"



This city was at that time the Liverpool of the Mediterranean. It possessed a splendid harbor, in which was concentrated the traffic of the sea which was then the highway of the nations; and as Liverpool has behind her the great towns of Lancashire, so had Ephesus behind and around her such cities as those mentioned along with her in the epistles to the churches in the book of Revelation -- Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. It was a city of vast wealth, and it was given over to every kind of pleasure, the fame of its theatre and race-course being world-wide. But Ephesus was still more famous as a sacred city. It was a seat of the worship of the goddess Diana, whose temple was one of the most celebrated shrines of the ancient world. This temple was enormously rich and harbored great numbers of priests. It was a resort at certain seasons of the year of flocks of pilgrims from the surrounding regions; and the inhabitants of the town flourished by ministering in various ways to this superstition. The goldsmiths drove a trade in little silver models of the image of the goddess which the temple contained and which was said to have fallen from heaven. Copies of the mystic characters engraven on this ancient relic were sold as charms. The city swarmed with wizards, fortune-tellers, interpreters of dreams, and other gentry of the like kind, who traded on the mariners, merchants, and pilgrims who frequented the port. **James Stalker** *Life of St. Paul* p.100

well-known name to the demon that they were trying to cast out, but what right had they to use it? ... According to magical theory, the potency of a spell is bound up with its secrecy; if it be divulged, it becomes ineffective. So these converted magicians renounced their imagined power by rendering their spells inoperative. **F.F. Bruce** *The Book of the Acts* p.390

Curious arts, in Greek an article and adjective, *the curious (things)*. The adjective originally means officious, over-busy; then meddlesome, inquisitive, as to the concerns of others (see 1 Tim.5,13); then as to invisible realities with special reference to futurity, occasioning the use of magical or occult arts, as means of information and discovery. *Curious* means inquisitive in this sense, i.e. prying into the secret things of God (Deut. 29:29) (The sense of rare or singular belongs to later usage.) For such practices Ephesus was famous in the ancient world, so that "Ephesian letters" or "inscriptions" ... was almost proverbial as a designation of written charms, amulets and talismans. **J.A. Alexander** *Acts Vol.2* p.200