

## **Ephesus**

After a brief visit to Ephesus, then to Jerusalem, Paul had returned to Antioch. After some time he again set out westward crossing the whole of mountainous Asia Minor. He finally reached Ephesus on the west coast and this time stayed for over three years. After first going to the local Jewish synagogue, he separated himself from them after three months because of their refusal of the Christ. They not only refused Christ, they spoke evil of Him. That is where the line is drawn. And is still today.

His encounter with these twelve disciples of John the Baptist is the last mention of the Holy Spirit coming upon men as a group. Such outward manifestations of the Spirit ceased long ago, as predicted by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (ch. 13), written while he was in Ephesus about this time. Paul put the speaking in tongues in godly perspective in that letter, ch 14. He later reminded the Ephesian believers themselves in a letter they had received the Spirit upon believing, not later, ch 1:13. Nevertheless some today mistakenly seek to revive the signs associated with “receiving the Spirit.”

The disciples of John were one of only four classes of those who initially received the Holy Spirit with signs. The signs were used by God to mark four important new beginnings or in the establishment of the Church as the new authentic people of God on the earth. After Israel had rejected its Messiah it forfeited its former place of honor and privilege.

~The first was on Pentecost in Jerusalem—the recipients were **Jews**. Acts 2.

~The second was in Samaria—the recipients were **Samaritans**, Gentiles with a pseudo-Jewish religion, see John 4. Acts 8.

~The third was in Joppa—**Gentiles**, Roman Cornelius and his friends, upon hearing the gospel from Peter. Acts 10.

~The fourth was in Ephesus—**disciples of John**, who had been somehow out of touch with the fact the Messiah had come, of whom John was forerunner. Acts 19.

There remain no more outlying groups to be incorporated.

This chapter also records a startling encounter with the demon world. The Spirit does not tell us of perhaps most of these incidents but just enough to display a full sample of the power of the Name of Jesus Christ against Satan, demonic powers, human afflictions and diseases, and death itself. The incidents were truly remarkable and witnessed by unbelievers and believers. But they always were done with an evident purpose to glorify the Father and the Son. They were not used to gratify the flesh, much less to punish sinners. Various signs and miracles were given before believers had the word of the New Testament in their hands to preach and teach, 1Corinthians 13:8-12. They were signs of the authenticity of the One the apostles and the disciples of Christ preached. They do not need continuing repetition for the word itself documents them for faith to

believe., Hebrews 2:3,4. Glimpses of the power of the risen ascended Christ to restrain and punish evil are also seen but only incidentally. Restraining evil is not the mission He gave us when He ascended. He said it will grow worse and worse. We are to be the light of the world to display Christ and His mercy to lost sinners in the world. We are to be the salt of the earth preserving it from God’s judgment and destruction until some can be saved out of it. Even Lot’s presence in Sodom temporarily preserved it from judgement. His witness though dim, went unheeded.

The public defeat of the fake Jewish exorcists by the demons led to an interesting turn of events. A book burning. The citizens of Ephesus were taken up with the occult and supernatural and some of the believers now realized what they had been involved with before receiving Christ. They still had dangerous and defiling stuff in their homes. To just throw it out would let it fall into the hands of the lost and unwary. So they burned them. Have we things in our homes that is blasphemous, immoral, violent? Are we reluctant to let go of them? Do they somehow have a hold upon us? Some books, magazines and pictures attract us especially if beautifully done. Religious books as well as secular can be dangerous, religious more so. “The Da Vinci Code” and “The Shack” are recent popular examples of blasphemous material with blasphemous premises. Not just books, but CD’s, tapes, games, videos, movies and web sites can be defiling. Parental controls are essential in homes. (Note that cell phones with access to the Internet will not accept Parental Controls available for TV and computers. Giving them a cell phone gives our most vulnerable loved ones, children and teens, full access and exposure to all of the evils and dangers on the Internet. Take charge!) As to books and CD’s, can materials labeled “adult” be edifying for anyone? Really, is any human being sophisticated enough to handle it?

No one commanded the book burning at Ephesus nor is it commanded in the Bible. Fathers, parents and heads of households are responsible for their “houses,” for what goes in, what goes on and what comes out. Prayerfully, take charge. The Lord will guide us through the same Spirit that led Paul and the Ephesian saints back then. Seek Him.

Before Paul could leave Ephesus the artists who made and sold idol images saw they were losing business because of the success of the gospel in the area. They mounted a religious demonstration to defend their pagan goddess Diana idolatrous. This is remindful of what occurred in Plymouth, England in the mid 1800’s. The theaters there shut down for lack of business after the word of God took hold of souls there. (I don’t think there were riots.) Preaching Christ did what preaching reform cannot. Preach Christ and Him crucified, 1Corinthians 1:18, 23.