

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A0928 – July 12, 2009 – Acts 19:8-20 – Teaching, Miracles, & Demons

Turn to Acts 19. Acts 19 begins Paul's third missionary journey and he's reached Ephesus so let's get an idea of Ephesus. Ephesus is in Asia Minor, on the eastern Aegean. It was a port city; and so a major commercial center which had a population of more than 350,000. It had three main streets so far as we can tell from what archaeology has uncovered. Harbor street, you got off the boat and walked up this street to the Great Theatre. Then you turned on Marble Street and it took you down to the marketplace, the great library of Celsus and across the street from that is the brothel. If you made it past the brothel, which I hope you did, you would turn left onto Curetes Street, and all along here you had businesses and the upper city was the administrative district. Now, these are the streets these events took place on. These are the streets Paul spent three years walking. These are the streets Paul met those twelve strange disciples of John the Baptist last week. These are the streets where Paul will do tremendous miracles. These are the streets on which the seven sons of Sceva will try to mimic Paul's miracles in the name of Jesus. These are the streets where Paul's influence in teaching the word is so great that it begins destroying the worship of Artemis. So imagine these things as we go through what happened here. Never, try never at least, to learn theology abstractly, always try to envision it, let it take over the imagination of your mind's eye, that's what God made your mind for, for the Holy Spirit to fill it with His truth. We use pictures to connect, to connect divine truth with real life.

Now, we want to cover two events in Ephesus, verses 8-10, Paul's impact through teaching the word of God and verses 11-20 Paul's impact through doing the works of God. The words and works of God are the emphasis in this section, over and against the words and works of Satan.

So, first verse 8-10, the teaching of the word of God. Paul has proclaimed Christ to the twelve disciples of John the Baptist; they've been baptized into the body of Christ so we've salvaged unity in the body of Christ once more, now Paul comes to the synagogue. **8And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.** A lot of time is covered in those three verses so we want to look at it in general and then we'll go into some of the details. Verse 8, **he entered the synagogue and continued speaking for three months**, this is the longest period we ever see Paul in a synagogue. They put up with it for three whole months as Paul followed his normal procedure, to the Jew first according to the doctrinal principle of Rom 1:16. See, this is an example of illustrating doctrine from the Book of Acts and not building doctrine from the Book of Acts. The doctrine comes from Rom 1; the illustration of the doctrine comes from Acts. So Paul went to the Jew first and as usual he would go to the synagogue, open up the OT and proceed to follow the historical framework methodology of Jewish history starting with the Call of Abraham, the Exodus, Mt Sinai, the Conquest and so forth, laying the framework. Then he'd come back and start building a Messianic profile from individual passages like Deut 21, Ps 22 and Isa 53 and then he'd present Jesus and say, see, Jesus fits the profile. And since Jesus is the Messiah then your king has come and if you repent He will return and set up the **kingdom of God**. Paul never re-defined the kingdom of God as something in your heart. No one ever re-defined the kingdom with that meaning, the kingdom of God is not in your heart and the throne of David is not in your chest. The kingdom of God is an earthly, political, spiritual kingdom and the throne of David is to be established in the city of Jerusalem. Never, ever in any reference in the entire word of God is the kingdom of God re-defined to be anything other than this future earthly kingdom. I direct you to the classic three-volume work *The Theocratic Kingdom* by Dr George N. H. Peters. Paul, like Peter proclaimed the kingdom of God and called the nation Israel to repent.

But after three months their response, in verse 9, **But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.** Notice again how the Jews became **hardened**, passive voice, which means something else was hardening them. They were already hard, now they're becoming hardened, like hard ground that won't receive rain, hard hearts won't receive the word of God and they became increasingly hardened. The result of which it says they became **disobedient** or rebellious. They were in autonomous rebellion against the word of God and said that the word of man is supreme. They become their own ultimate presupposition and began **speaking evil of the Way. The Way, *ten odon***, was the early name of Christianity, why'd they call it that? Because Jesus said, John 14:6, "I am the way," and therefore they said what better name than to express Jesus Christ as the sole way of salvation. And yet they rebelled against **the Way** and sealed their fates in the lake of fire because they continued to believe that the way of salvation was by works. But it's by faith, not of works lest any man should boast save in Christ and Him crucified. And therefore Paul says, alright, you've had your shot, I've given you the word first Jews, I've obeyed the command to go to the Jew first, now you've rejected the word, therefore I withdraw. And he **took away the disciples**. Notice the split, **took away** is very strong in the original, it's used of a shepherd cutting his sheep out from the goats and so Paul cuts his people out and says I don't want you hanging out with those characters, they've rejected the word of God, they're a bad influence on your theology, stay away from them. This is where you first see a tremendous split in the Book of Acts between Judaism and the Way. Before this they've been content to stay close, now things are beginning to separate out. So they went to **the school of Tyrannus**. Now, apparently the school was owned by this man **Tyrannus**. We don't know why he was named the Tyrant, maybe his students called him this because he was a Tyrant as professor or worse, perhaps his parents named him this. We don't know for sure but this man owned a lecture hall where philosophical lectures were delivered.

Now, the Western text at this point gives some additional information that agrees with the normal practices of the day. It says that Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus from 11am to 4pm. In other words for six days a week, five hours a day Paul taught the word of God. See, these hours were the hours of siesta. Everyone worked early in the morning and later in the

evening because it was cooler. Paul would work with Priscilla and Aquila in tent-making, but when 11 am came everyone took a siesta. It has been said that in Ephesus there were more people awake at 1am than 1pm. And therefore if anyone is going to be in that lecture hall from 11-4 it's going to be because something very interesting is being said. Now, the impact of the teaching is given in v 10, **This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.** Now, finally you've shown me an error in the word of God. There is no possible way the entirety of Asia could have heard the word of the Lord in two years. We can't even evangelize our community in 20 years. So let's see if this is true. First, consider Paul's schedule: for two years he went to the school of Tyrannus, he went five hours a day for six days a week, that's 30 hours of Bible teaching every week. I want you to remember this verse the next time someone says, now you be careful over at Fredericksburg Bible Church, you don't want to get too much doctrine, you'll get spiritually fat and become irrelevant. Now, I beg your pardon but Paul would laugh you right out of the halls of Tyrannus. For 2 years, 5 hours a day Paul taught the word of God because that's how much of the word of God you need to stand up to the pressures of life. The more the better because life is full of tragedies. And so Paul taught. If you do the math, 5 hours a day, 6 days a week for 104 weeks, that equals 3,120 hours of Bible doctrine. At the rate most churches do it, you come and get 20 minutes of announcements, 45 minutes of singing and 15 minutes of teaching, 90% of which has nothing to do with the text, but we'll give them the benefit of the doubt, and give them the whole 15. Let's say they meet four times a week and you show up all four times, you're devoted, so that's one hour of teaching a week, how long would it take you to get 3,120 hours of Bible teaching? Answer: 60 years. Paul did in two years what most churches teach in 60 years? Now may be you see how **all Asia heard the word of the Lord** in the space of two years. It's not that you can get too much Bible doctrine; it's that you can't get too much. This is how they evangelized the entire western Turkey. Today, forget it. Now, the way we do it here, we teach at max, absolute max 3 hours a week of content rich Bible lessons. And at the rate we're going it will take 20 years to teach the content Paul taught in 2. 20 years. Now I expect, I don't suggest, I expect every Bible student, you are a Bible student right. The word of God doesn't speak favorably of the Christian who doesn't study. And I expect, absolute minimum, two hours of study of every lesson I teach. Now, if you were to go home and study for two hours this passage I'm teaching today then it would

take you only seven years to get the content that Paul taught in two. But still look how far ahead they were, far ahead, this is the literal reason why Paul could go in and spend 5 or six months in a place and take an absolute pagan and train him and appoint him as an elder after only 5 months of being a believer. Because he had tremendous amount of Bible knowledge already in 5 months. And further, they had one of the greatest Bible teachers the world has ever known. Paul was an absolute theological genius. So when you read the words **so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord** you kind of smirk about that, yeah right. Think of all the material Paul must have covered. Now, verse 26 offers a second line of support. Here's Demetrius and Demetrius is Paul's enemy, Demetrius and company had a little silver trinket business and they were making big bucks off the tourists up on Harbor Street and Paul was putting this man out of business simply by teaching the word of God. This man didn't like Paul at all and yet he says, "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people." There's a saying, "You know how well your artillery's scoring by the screams from the enemy camp." And there they are. The initial screams of a great big riot over Paul. So the note of v 10 that all Asia heard is an accurate report. So accurate that in fact, we can say a third thing, during Paul's ministry in Ephesus churches were started in Hieropolis, Laodicea, Smyrna, Philadelphia, Collosae, Sardis, Thyatira, all these little cities you see on the map that had letters written to them by Christ in Rev 2-3, they were established by Paul's disciples. Paul didn't personally go plant those churches (Col 2:1; 4:13). Paul stayed in Ephesus and taught the word of God (Col 2:1; 4:13) but the people that heard Paul teach the word of God said, hey, this is something else and they went and told other people. You couldn't shut these people up, they'd go into the marketplace, yeah, you ought to come over during siesta to Tyrannus' place, there's this guy Paul there talking about the big questions in life, answering all the great questions, you ought to check it out and so one day they trotted over and tried it out and they said, this is amazing! And so they started giving up their daily siesta just to come hear Paul and people were coming to Christ in droves and they would stay and Paul would instruct. Paul instructed Jews as I instructed you on how to go into a synagogue and give an apologetic and they did this, normal men and women like yourselves, and when the rebellion started in the synagogue they'd go to the Greeks and I've instructed you on how to give an apologetic to Greeks and they went out and did it. They did it without cars, without e-mail,

without phones and still the word of God went all over this place. Now that gives reason for pause, that gives reason to reflect, what am I doing with all this Bible doctrine? Because like Paul, I'm not going to run all over the county. This location is like the school of Tyrannus, and some of you even think I'm a tyrant, but this is a central dissemination point for truth and I try to carry out this ministry in the same fashion as Paul. Training, training, training.

To accompany this teaching we have in verse 11, **God...performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.** Now we introduce miracles. Last week tongues, this week miracles. Now to show you how there are only certain ages in which miracles occur in high frequency let's do a quick survey of Bible history. A miracle, by the way, is simply when that which man observes to be the normal course of nature does not take place. So man goes out, he observes nature, he observes more of nature and he observes more and more and over time he builds up an experience base as to what occurs in nature and what does not. A miracle is when that experience base is shattered. Moses, for example, was out in a wilderness taking care of his father-in-law's sheep and he observed this tree and that bush and he observed them over and over and in the summer he'd see them catch on fire. Literally down in the Sinai it gets so hot the things will just come ablaze and Moses saw this phenomenon for 40 years till one day he saw one bush on fire, oh, just another bush on fire, but wait, it wasn't burning up. Conclusion: miracle.

Alright, now there were periods of miracles and in the history of the human race there are four high frequency periods, periods when miracles exploded on the scene and then they just fade out and disappear, and this can be observed throughout the Scriptures. The first period is the period of the Exodus. I want you to notice (I've given you a chart in your bulletin to help you follow), this and see the common elements. And when you see these common elements I think it'll help some of you put this together so you get it in a package that's manageable and you can carry around and use it.

In the first period of high frequency miracles you had two men, Moses and Joshua. Moses was involved in starting them, Joshua finished them. Moses

from the start of the Exodus through Joshua at the end of the Conquest when it fizzled out at Bochim. Study that section of the OT and you'll find a high frequency of miracles. Another thing that you'd find in that first period of high frequency miracles is that the kingdom is born. The kingdom of God is being emphasized, by that we mean the theocratic kingdom of the nation Israel. And we mean to say that it was those miracles that brought the kingdom into history, an absolutely unique kingdom, a kingdom of God over against the kingdom of man.

The second period of high frequency miracles doesn't occur until the days of Elijah and Elisha. That's 600 years after the Exodus, 600 years of the everyday norm, and then you have a sudden explosion of miracles. Notice again, two men of God are identified with the high frequency period, one at its beginning, one at its end. Notice as with the first period of high frequency miracles you have two generations, so with the second period of miracles you have two generations. These high frequency miracles don't last for more than that. At the second period of high frequency miracles what was happening with the kingdom? It was in decline; the worshippers of Baal had worked their way into the administration of the kingdom of God and so it was in danger of total collapse. Elijah and Elisha are called in to salvage the kingdom. A second period of high frequency miracles.

The third period of high frequency miracles doesn't occur for another 800 years. 800 years of the everyday norm and then come two groups, Jesus and the apostles. Jesus started them, the apostles finished them; just like the Moses/Joshua motif, just like the Elijah/Elisha motif. Notice again that the high frequency period lasts only for two generations and then it dies. And notice again the kingdom is involved because the kingdom is being offered two times to Israel. Jesus offered it during His earthly ministry, He says repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. You can have it right now if you'll only accept Me as your Messiah. They reject, but then they get a second chance with the apostles and so Peter gets up in Acts 2 and Acts 3 and he says Israel, your Messiah has ascended to heaven and He will remain there until you repent, and when you repent He will return and bring in the times of restoration. So, all during the third period of high frequency miracles, the kingdom is being offered.

The fourth period in history of miracles will be at the Second Coming of Christ and again two groups are involved; Elijah and the two witnesses. Same exact motif. God consistently shows us this pattern. This is how you know it's the hand of God in history. He builds historical pattern so you can see His hand. And also notice again, the kingdom of God is being offered to the nation Israel again. This next time they'll receive it, they'll receive their King.

So notice the common elements in each of these four periods. Each high frequency period is kicked off by one man and usually ended under the ministry of another man. Each high frequency period last for about two generations, that's all. And finally, each high frequency period involves the kingdom, either it is being introduced or it is under threat.

Now, in Acts 19 we have Paul doing some unusual miracles, tremendously unusual manifestations of power. What period on our chart is Paul in? Period 3. Jesus has done his miracles and offered the kingdom; the apostle Paul is doing miracles during the re-offer phase of the kingdom. So now that we're oriented to history and located in period 3 let's look at the miracles in this period. There's a series of patterns to the miracles as you study through this period.

Our first observation is that Peter and Paul are the primary men doing miracles. Their ministries parallel in a number of ways. Peter in Acts 3:2ff heals a lame man; Paul in Acts 14:8 heals a lame man. Peter in Acts 5:16 exorcizes a demon; Paul in Acts 16:18 exorcizes a demon; Peter encounters and defeats a sorcerer in Acts 8:18ff; Paul encounters and defeats a sorcerer in Acts 13:6ff; Peter raises a girl from the dead in Acts 9:36ff; Paul raises a dead man in Acts 20:9ff; and finally, Peter escapes miraculously from prison in Acts 12:7ff and Paul escapes miraculously from prison in Acts 16:25ff. So our observation is that during this period Peter and Paul are the primary agents of miracles and their ministries parallel.

The second observation is that Paul's ability to do miracles decreases during the transitional period. Remember, Acts is a book of transition and Paul can easily do miracles at this time in Ephesus, about AD53. Let's turn back to Acts 5, back at the beginning of Acts. Acts 5 is about AD35. In Acts 5:14-15 Peter goes around, his shadow is cast over everyone in verse 15 and verse 16,

end of the verse, what's the report? All were being healed? Every one, universal supernatural healing. That's AD35. All right, the passage before us in Acts 19 occurred around AD53; Paul's clothing just touches someone and their healed, demons are exorcised. Then, in Phil 2:25-28 which is in AD60 Paul leaves Epaphroditus sick. Why didn't he just heal him? Then, in 1 Tim 5:26, which is AD62 he says, you got stomach problems, drink a little wine. Why didn't you heal them Paul? Finally in 2 Tim 4:20, in AD67 he says I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. And what's the next big date after that; very famous date in NT history? It's the date of the Fall of Jerusalem when the fifth degree of discipline was leveled. The nation Israel had been given 40 years to respond to the claims of Jesus as Messiah. Jesus offered Himself personally for three years; they rejected him and put Him on the cross. The apostles came after Jesus and re-offered the kingdom for 37 years. A total of 40 years of the kingdom offer, the period of testing in the Scripture. And the nation said we don't want Jesus, we don't want Jesus, we don't want Jesus. Every town Paul goes to the Jews say uh, uh and the more they say uh, uh what happens to the frequency of miracles. They fade out. Why? Because the kingdom offer was fading out. Why? Because the nation Israel continued to reject. It's very simple and any one of you with a concordance who can read can find these things out for yourself. Don't take my word for it. Just go through the pages of Scripture and you'll see they were fading out till the point Paul can't heal anybody.

But at this time the miracles are still happening en masse. So verse 11, **God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul**, quite obviously, look at what was happening in verse 12. **handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.** What this means is Paul didn't even have to go to these people, day after day he would sit comfy in his chair working on his leather-goods and day after day someone would come and say, hey Paul, you mind giving me a handkerchief, we got a guy sick on seventh street. Oh, well, here take my sweat rag, that's what a **handkerchief** was, and so he'd take it off his head, put a fresh one on and keep on working. They would take it to seventh street, touch it to the sick guy and he'd be well. Extremely powerful miracles completely unheard of in the ancient world, which is the whole point of this account. And not only did they counter the works of the local magicians, demonstrating the infinite power of the living **God**, but they also authenticated Paul as God's messenger (2 Cor 12:12).

Paul was an apostle and what was the sign of an apostle? He saw the Lord eyeball to eyeball, was orthodox in theology and did miracles.ⁱ

Now we come to vv 13-20 and this introduces the problem in Ephesus. In every city Paul enters there's a sin problem that dominates that region in the quest of autonomous man to suppress the truth. This is always the quest of autonomous man. In Athens the suppression was intellectual and if you were an intellectual type you would be drawn to Athens. That's the rationalistic approach to suppressing truth which is a legalistic strategy of the sin nature, I'm going to solve all my problems because my brain is so BIG, I can explain the nature of the universe. But as Paul showed, every rationalistic system contains the seeds of irrationalism and eventually exposes itself to radical contradictions. That's Athens. In the city of Corinth the suppression wasn't intellectual but sexual. They prided themselves in being the sex capital of the ancient world. That's the immoral approach to suppressing the truth which is a licentious strategy of the sin nature; I'm going to escape my problems by drowning myself in alcohol and sex. That's Corinth. Now we come to Ephesus and Paul finds another strategy at work. Ephesus was the center of magic and dark arts. And so this is neither the intellectual nor the sexual but the mystical approach to suppressing the truth. Even Shakespeare knew of it in his day when he wrote his *Comedy of Errors*; he described Ephesus by the mouth of Syracusan Antipholus,

“They say this town is full of cozenage [fraud],
As, nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks [charlatans],
And many such-like liberties of sin.

This kind of a thing was even better known in Paul's day and we have a number of magic scrolls collected from this area attesting to it as a magic center. Paul himself in the Book of Ephesians attests to this fact. Turn to Eph 6. Remember that all of Paul's epistles are being written out of his four journeys in the Book of Acts. So Acts is the background for these epistles and therefore you expect to find sections of these epistles grounded back in Acts. And here we find, in chapter 6 how Paul handled the demonic magic in Ephesus.

Paul agreed with the magicians at Ephesus that there was something more than just the material universe. The materialist always says there's nothing more than matter, all is matter. And that limits you tremendously of any explanatory power of human choice, love, all the personal attributes of man must in the end be reduced to mere atoms knocking around. Man is a product of impersonal chance or determinism. One or the other but this is all you are left with, a gob of material, you, I and everyone else are just chemically determined.

Paul said absolutely not, there's a cosmic war going on and the front lines were in Ephesus. So v 10 he begins to address an ancient problem with modern parallels. There were Christians then and now who played with demons, engaged in channeling and other sorcery games, but I warn you, it's a very real and very dangerous game.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” See this is their area of weakness in the sin nature so he has to exhort them in this as a final note, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” In other words we've got an enemy that must be defended against, and primarily the defense is against schemes, a word that means plots, the point is ideas. Basically the devil isn't an idiot, he's brilliant and he knows that if he can get your thinking messed up by feeding you a line of ideas that are anti-biblical then he can direct you away from Christ. It's not some big immorality he's after, he's after your mind, he's a deceiver by nature and his point is to screw up your thinking. Verse 12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” Now that shows you the nature of the conflict. It's not basically against men, it's against demonic forces, and therefore, if that is the case the nature of the conflict is spiritual. And they are constantly trying to divert you from Christ, divert you away from the word of God, divert you from what is important in life. That's spiritual warfare and therefore v 13 instructs the kind of armor you have to have to fight a spiritual battle. And further v 12 distinguishes two classes of demons, the rulers and the powers. Those are two ranks which shows you the demons are organized and so when they go to war against you, which is basically all the time, it's an organized

strategy. They're not fumbling around like we do most of the time; they're organized in the assault. And therefore we have to be fully armed. Verse 13, "take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." Spiritual battle requires spiritual armor, the armor of God. If you're not armed you better be because you're in a conflict and you don't go into battle half covered, you go fully covered. The picture is you get armed and you stand firm because you've already taken the high ground. The victory in Christ and the opponent is trying to move you off the high ground and you're called to stand firm, don't move. Verse 14, the means, and you'll see a whole lot of positional truth in these verses, if you don't know your position in Christ go back and read Eph 1-3. That's your position, this is who you are as a Christian. You are in Christ, you are predestined, you are adopted, you are redeemed, and all those truths Paul speaks in Eph 1. "Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The point is you are all these things. The only issue now is are you going to apply them by faith and walk the Christian life? He's done everything and you have at your disposal every means of standing on the high ground and fending off any idea that comes against you to de-stabilize you as a Christian.

So Paul, in Ephesians 6:12-18, in this very well known section in the epistle to the Ephesians deals in a major way with the struggle against demonic power that was so rampant in Ephesus, the struggle to keep your eyes on the word of God and not on the smoke and mirrors. And now our verses show how Paul uses the armor to clear Ephesus of a lot of its demonic character.

And by v 13, a little tag along group has picked up on what Paul was doing - his extraordinary miracles and so **some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."** Now the **Jewish exorcists** were highly respected in the ancient world. And they went around from town to town (*perierchomai*) making a living doing magic. And they did so in absolute violation of God's law. So let's look at the law in Deut 18:9. In our society magic and the occult

have become the accepted norms. Even most Christians think, oh, it's just Disney, its harmless and their all primers into demonism and occultism are all under the guise of playfulness and fun. Satan doesn't come with a pitchfork and horns; he's an angel of light, white magic. And many Christians are engaging in absolutely apostate activities such as hypnotism, channeling, meditation, eastern meditation, clearing the mind type meditation, not biblical meditation. You say, oh, but it's not that prevalent, not in our community. Oh really! About two months ago I had a very nice lady call me at the church asking me if we'd like to sponsor some not so well-to-do kids in our community so they could attend a hypnosis event. And so I let her go through her spiel and when she got done I just asked, "Could you send me more information?" And she said, "Sir, what we're trying to do is get a commitment to one or two or three kids and once we get a commitment we'll give you more information." So finally I just said it, "M'am, we are Christians and Christianity teaches that God is sovereign over the universe and that evil spirits are a source of magic and occultism and evil in our world. Therefore to sponsor a child for your event would be completely inconsistent with Christianity and we do not want to send any child into that kind of an environment." And she said, "That's a very interesting response." Now, I don't know what the lady did with it, but it was well-received and well-respected that someone stood up for the truth of the word of God. We're not going to sponsor kids getting inducted into demonic activity. What did God say in the Law to Israel, verse 9, "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. ¹⁰"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire," that was the practice of worshipping Moloch. They actually did take their little infant babies and throw them alive in the fire just south of the city of Jerusalem and they'd beat the drums real loud so the mothers wouldn't have to hear the screams of the babies. Absolutely horrible things done to appease the gods like all the other nations. Or "one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ¹¹or one who casts a spell," which is what we have going on in the book of Acts, the casting of spells, "or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead." That's a necromancer. We met one of those in Acts 16 at Philippi, the young girl who had a ventriloquist demon and she was being used by the crime syndicate to make a lot of money and the demon inside that girl could cast her voice down at the ground and make it sound like the voice of your great grandma or something

and coming up from the ground most people were duped, that's the necromancer of v 11. And Paul shut that organization down. Verse 12, "For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD;" verse 14, "For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you *to do so*." Alright, well if we're not to listen to witches and diviners who are we supposed to listen to? Verse 15, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." And that's a Messianic text, that's a Messianic prophecy. You listen to the great Messiah who is the very word of God; you don't listen to these two-bit charlatans and conjurers.

Now the Christian view of what's happening when these witches and spiritists do their thing is that they are actually in communication with demonic spirits. They're not contacting real dead people; human spirits don't roam the earth. There is no human spirit of a dead person roaming around. There are demons roaming around and they can be contacted through certain activities described in these verses. So we say, oh yes, it's very real what's going on but it's in absolute violation of the word of God. God says, you listen to Me, you listen to My word.

Now back in Acts 19 what happened was you had these **Jewish exorcists**, they'd picked up on Paul and followed him, listening closely, because in the ancient world the power of magic was the power of secrecy.ⁱⁱ There were certain code words that you had to know to do magic. And it was the secrecy of the code words that gave the code words their power. So if it became well-known, the code word would lose its secrecy and therefore its power.ⁱⁱⁱ They want Paul's power so they listen in close and they hear Paul use the word Jesus, *Iesou* and so what do they do, they start saying *Iesou*, over everybody, trying to tap into this power^{iv}.

But in verse 15, **the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"** Independently of Paul, God refutes the premise of magic, and in so doing he refutes the premise of the magic of the local hypnotists, palm readers, magicians, witches and so forth, all human viewpoint. The universe is not run by magical principles, its run by God's sovereign word. And so in a humorous way the evil spirit who speaks out of the person whom he indwells says **I recognize Jesus, and I know Paul but who** the hell do you think you are? You don't

have authority over me and this was news, because it just shattered the axiom of all magic. The axiom of all magic is that we have power over all evil that we can manipulate. And the demon says I don't care if you think you're manipulating my friend, you're not going to manipulate me. Who are you, who do you think you are? You have no authority to do anything.

And to further demonstrate that man has no power over evil, in verse 16 he beat the tar out of all seven of them. **And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.** That's one of the humorous notes of Scripture. It's some of the early streakers making their first streak. Man thinks he has so much power that he can manipulate the forces of evil is obviously way outclassed by the forces of darkness. The natural man can't manipulate them; they manipulate and control you. So, using Jesus as a magic charm didn't work.

And, Acts 19:17, **This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus;** you can imagine how that traveled around the town gossip grapevine, **and fear fell upon them all.** Again it's the work of the Spirit to produce fear, to break people from their pagan alliances to magic, **and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.** Now, what does it mean to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus? It's to recognize it's not some kind of a charm but respect, respect for who Jesus Christ is as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and as a result, v 18, **Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.** Notice, many who had believed, these are people who became believers in the previous weeks. But they were still steeped in their magical practices. They were still operating as pagans, which shows you that the moment you become a Christian you don't all of a sudden give up all paganism. Most of us imported most of our paganism into Christianity and then begins the slow gradual process of getting rid of it.^v So sometime after they had believed they began to **come**, an inchoate imperfect tense, **they began to come, confessing and disclosing their practices.** They broke with the cult. When you read that word **confessing**, this isn't what you think of confession, saying you did a wrong thing. Sure, they had done a wrong thing but here's the issue, in magic circles in the ancient world the power of magic was in the secrecy. As long as those words remained secret they had power. So when it says they confessed it means they began to stand up and openly reveal their secret code words breaking the power. And therefore all the books that contained all their secret words were rendered worthless and the other people

who used those words would have to start all over developing new words. So you can imagine the local magic guild would be pretty bent about this and might lead to threats on their lives.

In Acts 19:19 **And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and *began* burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.** So day after day, the verb is in the imperfect, day after day they kept **burning them** and they burned and they burned so they had bonfires all over the city of Ephesus. And as they would do this the early elders of the Church began to **count the price of the books**, and to give you an idea of what an impact it was, the final price is given at the end of verse 19, **fifty thousand pieces of silver.** Now if you want to translate that into present dollars the best way of doing it is to think of a day's wage; multiply it by 50,000 and that's the total cost of the books that were destroyed in the book **burning** incident. So needless to say, Christianity had the attention of a few people and needless to say Christianity made a fantastic impact here at this point. And verse 20 concludes with one of Luke's report cards, **the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.** What has the power? The word of God has the power, not the word of man. So what are you going to trust?

Alright, so we've seen the tremendous Bible teaching ministry of Paul at Ephesus, thousands of hours of Bible teaching and you can never get too much Bible teaching. We've seen how this resulted in church plants all over Asia. We've also seen how the power of Satan was broken by the power of God in Ephesus so that a severe dent was made in the magic business.

ⁱ That pieces of cloth from Paul's body were being used this way reminds us of those who were healed by merely touching the fringe of Jesus' cloak in Mark 5:27ff; 6:56. It may also remind us of the extraordinary miracles done by Peter's shadow as he walked down the Cardo of Jerusalem in Acts 5:15.

ⁱⁱ God also enabled him [Solomon] to learn that skill which expels demons,^c which is a science useful and sanative to men. He composed such incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return, (46) and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The

manner of the cure was this:—(47) He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. (48) And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man; (49) and when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly; for which reason it is, that all men may know the vastness of Solomon’s abilities, and how he was beloved of God, and that the extraordinary virtues of every kind with which this king was endowed may not be unknown to any people under the sun; for this reason, I say, it is that we have proceeded to speak so largely of these matters.ⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ Many Jews were well-respected magicians in ancient times; they were thought to have very effective spells. Josephus tells us that Solomon had the skill to exorcize demons and that by the 1st century Jewish exorcists had pawned some of his methods. But they’ve been listening to Paul use the name **Jesus** so they start using it, it’s a secret incantation they think. The closest thing we’ve found to the expression of v 13 is in a papyri in Paris, no 574, line 3018 where it says, “I adjure thee by Jesus the God of the Hebrews.” So His name was being misused as a mere magic spell by these Jewish exorcists and being used in this way it was of none effect.

^{iv} In particular the name of the God of Israel was known among the pagans not to be pronounced by vulgar lips, which they misinterpreted to mean that it was a secret magic spell. Magical papyri we have from the time attempt to reproduce the name of the God of Israel—Iao, Iae, Iaoue, and so forth as well as other Jewish expressions and names like Sabaoth and Abraham.

^v Cf Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8:13; 22-23.

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