



The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

1

The Acts of the Apostles

- Cindy's question - **"why is it that the O.T. Jews under the sacrificial system did not experience forgiveness"**?
- The Levitical system was a part of the law of Moses and the function of the law was never to make peace between God and man. (Maybe a temporary truce)
- The function of the law was to expose sin – Gal 3:19 **Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins.** NLT

2

2

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- Animal sacrifices provided a temporary covering for sins, but, did not solve the sin problem within the individual.
- The OT Jew did experience forgiveness **WHEN** they believed in the one to come **AND** brought an offering as the proof of their faith.
- The weakness of the Levitical system was that while it provided a temporary covering, it never actually removed a single sin.

3

3

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- Hebrews 10:4 **For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** NLT
- Sins were never taken away via the Levitical system, but the O.T. saints were forgiven when they believed in the One to come **AND** showed signs of obedience.
- Gal 3:19 (again) **“Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins”.** NLT

4

4

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- So what was the promise?
- Genesis 3:15 “And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” NLT
- The promise was that God would send one through the woman who would crush the head of the one who was destined to crawl around for a time.

5

5

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- Under the old covenant one was saved when they believed in the Messiah to come - the evidence of their faith was their attempts to obey the commands of God.
- Under the new covenant one is saved when we believe Jesus is the Messiah - the evidence of our faith is our attempts to obey the commands of God.

6

6

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- It is easy to see the symmetry between the old and new covenants when we understand that genuine faith will always produce genuine works.
- 1st John 2:3 **And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments.** 4 If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. NLT
- This becomes a tough place to go because what it reveals is "no obedience, no faith".

7

7

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And this naturally leads us all to someone we know who professes to be saved but shows no evidence to us of their claim.

Allow me to say just this – there are degrees of obedience that could be so subtle that they are undetectable to us.

8

8

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- Acts 19:13 A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" **14 Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. 15 But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" 16 Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered. 17 The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored.**

9

9

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- **Acts 19:13 A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits.**
- We should think of this group of Jews as a traveling “show” where they went town to town and claimed to be able to cast out demons. (probably for a fee)
- It seems they showed up in Ephesus just in time to see or at least hear about the unusual miracles being effectuated through Paul. (like Simon in Acts 8 they wanted to do the same miracles)

10

10

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- **“They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, “I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!”**
- This is a great example of people wanting the power of God without actually wanting God – just his power.
- These Jews wanted to be known for miracles and casting out demons, but they showed no interest in being like the Miracle Worker.

11

11

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- As we might expect this does not go well – they confront a demon possessed man thinking that they will be successful just by dropping a name.
- The demon in the man says, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?”.
- I don’t think the demon was saying he didn’t know their names so much as the demon was saying “you are a nobody with no power whatsoever over me”.

12

12

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- The seven sons of Sceva get trounced by this one man possessed by a demon and he sends them packing - beaten, bloodied, and stripped of their clothing.
- A word to the wise – do not mess with the occult or demons if you do not know God.
- **“The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike** – of course it did because in Ephesus everyone was interested in “spiritual” things. (14 temples dedicated to pagan gods)

13

13

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- **“A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored”**
- Is it not interesting that God uses the humiliation of the seven sons of Sceva to bring about a holy reverence for his name and a genuine fear of God on the city?
- **Proverbs 16:6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.**

14

14

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- Acts 19:18 **Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices.** 19 A number of them who had been practicing sorcery **brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire.** The value of the books was several million dollars. 20 So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect. 21 **Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem.** “And after that,” he said, “I must go on to Rome!” 22 He sent his two assistants, Timothy and Erastus, ahead to Macedonia while he stayed awhile longer in the province of Asia.

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15

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- Acts 19:18 **Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices.** 19 A number of them who had been practicing sorcery **brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire.**
- Is it not amazing how a display of spiritual power, even dark spiritual power, can be the thing that turns hearts from unbelief to belief?
- Maybe the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit seen in us will turn some hearts to the Lord?

16

16

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- And notice what a change was wrought in the people of Ephesus – they were suddenly ready to rid themselves of the things connected to the spirit underworld.
- When they understood that dabbling in occultic practices creates dangerous connections to evil they were quickly ready to divest themselves of such things.
- Perhaps if the people of our day could see who is behind fortune telling, quija boards, and tarot cards many would do just what the people of Ephesus did.

17

17

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- Acts 19:23 **About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way.** 24 It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. 25 He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows: **"Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business.** 26 But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't really gods at all. And he's done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! 27 **Of course, I'm not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I'm also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!"** 28 At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, **"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"** 29 Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. 30 Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn't let him. 31 Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater.

18

18

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• Acts 19:32 **Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another.** Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there. 33 The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward and told him to explain the situation. He motioned for silence and tried to speak. 34 **But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again and kept it up for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"** 35 At last the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. "Citizens of Ephesus," he said. **"Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven. 36 Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash.** 37 You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess. 38 "If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges. 39 And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. 40 I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say." 41 Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

19

19

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- From verse #23 to #41 we have the account of a riot in Ephesus over funding the silversmith's union – sort of!
- Paul and company became so successful at convincing the pagans in town that Jesus is the Christ that their conversions were affecting the local economy.
- Demetrius loved and worshipped Artemis so much that when the pagans of the city stopped buying his little silver "gods" he had to defend her honor. 😊

20

20

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- So here was a man who was making a living off occultic items like little graven images – and I think there is a commandment against that somewhere isn't there?
- You see Demetrius didn't really care about all this Christian stuff until he did – he started caring when it cost him something.
- The lesson for us is that our culture doesn't much care when we go to church on Sunday and do not affect the culture.

21

21

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- But the culture around us does care when the saints come together on Sunday and are sufficiently edified to carry the message of Christ to work on Monday.
- There is lots of money to be made on sin – drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography, human trafficking, abortion, and so on.
- This is why when we are being opposed by our culture or by the enemy himself, we should wear it like a badge of honor.

22

22

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- A few obvious lessons for us in these days is found by observing this mob that was led by Demetrius.
 - The mob was able to vocalize a righteous sounding reason for their opposition to Christianity.
 - The mob was threatening and violent.
 - The mob was loud and obnoxious.
 - Most of the mob did not know why they were even there.
 - The incident shows that an effective deterrent to mob violence is the threat of governmental retribution.

23

23

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The next slide offers some proof of how effective Paul and company's work in Ephesus was.

24

24

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• Rev 2:1 “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands: 2 “I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. 3 You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. 4 “But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! 5 Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. 6 But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do. 7 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God. NLT

25

25

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- Ephesus started out well – they had some issues but still did well until about 200 A.D.
- A generation of pagans turned to Christ and made an eternal difference in many for about 150 years – and that “ain’t nothing”.
- Today there are no temples to Artemis but neither are there any churches – the new religion in the region is Islam.

26

26

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- Acts 20:7 **On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord’s Supper.**
- Notice when the believers are meeting for worship – they are meeting on Sunday, resurrection day.
- Constantine may have codified it, but he did not start the tradition of the church meeting for worship and fellowship on Sunday – the early church did.

27

27

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- Sunday is not the Christian sabbath – we are not Sabbatarian nor are we semi-Sabbatarian.
- Sabbatarian are Christian sects who have more or less transferred the rules for keeping the OT sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. (Seven Day Adventists)
- The 4th commandment regarding keeping the sabbath is the only one of the 10 commandments not repeated in the New Testament.

28

28

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- The sabbath was for Israel – not for the church as evidenced by the absence of the command in the New Testament.
- Exodus 31:13 “**You are to speak to the people of Israel** and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, **for this is a sign between me and you** throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.’”
- It is very interesting that many of the Jews “beefs” with Jesus centered around what he did on the sabbath.

29

29

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- Acts 20:9 As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories **to his death below**. 10 Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. “Don’t worry,” he said, “**he’s alive!**”
- Have you noticed there no set “steps” when it comes to the accounts of resurrecting of the dead?
- Elijah laid upon the widow’s son, Jesus called to Lazarus, He touched the coffin of a widow’s son, and here Paul lifts Eutychus up and declares him to be alive.

30

30

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- Why do you suppose there are no “procedures” to follow when it comes to resurrections?
- Because mankind would think of it is a transactional process as opposed to a move of God.
- Think about this – if God was willing and able to raise Eutychus from the dead why didn't he just keep him awake and prevent his death in the first place?

31

31

Questions

32

32
