

**Signs of the Kingdom.**  
Acts 19:11-20.  
Sunday morning, July 24, 2011.

**I. The powers of God's kingdom.**

- A. Vs. 10 had told us about the unusual spread of the gospel from the city of Ephesus during the roughly three years Paul stayed and ministered there. "All who dwelt in (the Roman province of) Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."
- B. The section of Vss. 11-20 opens up for us how this came about. Effects like this did not happen in other places Paul ministered, so it had everyone's attention.
  - 1. Vs. 11 reads literally: "Powers beyond the usual God worked by the hands of Paul." Occasional miracles had attended the gospel ministry of Paul as the book of Acts witnesses, but nothing on the scale and of the kind that attended Paul's ministry in Ephesus.
  - 2. Even handkerchiefs and aprons were taken from Paul's body, brought to the sick and demon possessed, and sickness and demons fled.
    - By "handkerchiefs" what is meant is the sweat bands which Paul wore around his head to keep the sweat from dripping in his eyes while working.
    - By "aprons" is meant the tool aprons Paul wore while making tents.
- C. Needless to say, these kinds of signs did not go by unnoticed in the Greek world which was obsessed with the gods and the supernatural. As such all eyes were on Paul, especially so on the part of those who trafficked in the magical arts and exorcisms as Simon the magician had done in Samaria in Acts 8.
- D. Jews were generally regarded as experts on spiritual matters in those days, especially were they held in high regard as exorcists.
- E. It is no wonder then that many of the Jews thus occupied were desirous to tap into the power displayed and at work through Paul.

In acts 8 Simon the magician had sought to tap into this power, and he had offered money to the apostles so he also might be able to use this power.  
Peter had rebuked him sharply and called him to repentance for the evil of greed and selfish ambition at work in his heart. Acts 8:20-24.

**II. The powers of darkness.**

- A. Among the many who desired to have, and experimented with tapping into, the powers at work through Paul, were seven brothers, the sons of a Jewish chief priest named Sceva.
- B. They attempted to cast out a demon by exorcising him "in the Name of Jesus whom Paul preaches."
- C. The demon answered them saying: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you? With that he attacked the seven of them so that they had to flee in pain and in shame; naked and wounded.
- D. Several things may be observed from this incident:
  - 1. That the powers of darkness are intimately aware of the progress of Christ's kingdom. "Jesus I know, and Paul I am familiar with..."
  - 2. That man, apart from the Lord's provision and protection, is no match at all

for the powers of darkness. These seven brothers could not stand up against this one man, empowered by the powers of darkness.

3. What is true here in the physical realm, is also true in the spiritual realm. Eve, in her unfallen wisdom and innocence, fell prey to his wiles.

Solomon, the wisest man to ever live apart from the Lord, was led astray by his scheming, and David the man after God's own heart, ended up giving in to his suggestions. 1 Chronicles 21:1

Even Michael, the Archangel, did not dare to take on the devil personally, but deferred the matter to the Lord saying: "The Lord rebuke you." Jude 9, see also 2 Peter 2:10-12.

4. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, as head of the new, redeemed humanity, although tried, yet He prevailed against the wiles of the devil. Matthew 4:1-11.

### III. The triumph of the gospel.

The results of this incident were glorious for the Lord and His kingdom.

- A. The incident of the seven sons of Sceva became known throughout all Ephesus; both to the Jews and to the Greeks.
- B. A whole new kind of fear and sobriety took hold of them; no doubt with regard to two things:
  1. With regards to the powers of darkness; they saw that they could not stand before such powers and that they were no match for such powers.
  2. With regards to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ; they saw that they could not use (and abuse) His name by using it as a magic formula at their discretion;
- C. Many of the people of Ephesus began to see that to be protected from the powers of such darkness, one must be rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ; one must take their rightful place before Him and before His kingdom.
- D. Many of those who had already believed suddenly made great strides in the grace of sanctification, confessing and telling their deeds. They had been holding out on the Lord in various areas of their lives, but now came to make a full surrender and to take their rightful place before Him.
- E. Those who had been involved in dabbling with the supernatural, (and many Jews had done so), now came wanting nothing further to do with it, publicly burning their books, valued at tens of thousands of dollars in our currency.

#### Applications:

1. Has the truth come home to you that you are no match for, and have no protection from the powers and the wiles of the devil other than by seeking shelter under the wings of the Lord Jesus Christ; other than by taking your rightful place before Him?
2. Has the truth dawned on you that doing so is ultimately an all or nothing proposition. Whatever area's of your life you do not bring under the Lordship of Christ, these continue to constitute so many open doors for the evil one to invade your life and work his sinister designs, stealing your heart away from Christ.
3. These Ephesians burned all bridges with the past; consecrated themselves to Christ alone, and so the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. The Lord's table is given to us to this end; to do business with the Lord, and to be restored.