

## Did The City Clerk Get It Right?

Acts 19:35-41.

Sunday, August 14, 2011.

### I. Confusion and Commotion.

#### A. Hallmarks of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit are:

1. It is a quiet and orderly work. Luke 17:20 and 1 Corinthians 14:40
2. It is a powerful work; a work that changes hearts and lives and turns them to God in truth. 2 Tim. 1:7
3. It is a work restoring genuine love to the soul. Love toward God, and love toward our fellow man. Romans 5:5, 1 Timothy 1:5, and 2 Timothy 1:7.
4. It is a work that restores to us a sound mind; that is a mind able to discern reality for what it is.
  - So in Mark 5:15 the man who had been possessed by a legion of demons is seen sitting at Jesus' feet, "clothed and in his right mind."
  - In Luke 15:17 it is said of the prodigal son: "When he came to himself he said... (that is when he came to a right mind), how many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Thus he returned to his father with a repentant heart. See also again 2 Timothy 1:7.

#### B. Opposite the spectrum of marks characterizing the work of the Holy Spirit we find the marks of the work of the Devil.

1. His work is marked by confusion.

Keeping people off balance; keeping them in the dark, keeping them away from the truth, and the truth away from them. See how he fills the whole city of Ephesus with confusion in vs. 29. Vs. 31 adds that the majority of the 24,000 people in the theater were confused and did not know why they had come together.
2. His work is marked by commotion.
  - Note the people rushing into the theater "with one accord," seemingly spontaneously. You didn't need a reason to go along; you wouldn't want to miss it, whatever was going on!
  - Hear the deafening and mind-numbing chant by the crowd: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Two hours long, without let-up! By then you could not get this chant out of your head.

Many people by then would say to themselves: "If this many people affirm this thing to be so with this much emotion and commotion, then it must be true."

More discerning minds would ask themselves: "Does all this emotion, commotion, and chanting truly make Diana great?"

### II. Rebuked by the city clerk.

- A. The Roman province of Asia was governed by a provincial government, seated in the provincial capital which was Ephesus in this case.
- B. Within Roman provinces cities could earn the status of "free cities," allowing them some measure of autonomy and to establish their own laws under the

overarching authority of Rome. However such a status and such privileges could easily be forfeited if Rome believed that such a free city was not able to control its unruly elements.

- C. The city clerk was the highest ranking official of the city council, and also the representative of the city council with the provincial Roman government. As such the people pay him respect when he gets up. Not doing so would automatically trigger the provincial authorities (also stationed in Ephesus, and undoubtedly not unaware of what was going on) to step in and to put down this uprising with force.
- D. The city clerk advances two arguments:
1. The status and reputation of Diana stands secure; all in Asia know this, and therefore your reaction is over the top and way too impulsive. Furthermore, these two men (Aristarchus and Gaius) are neither robbers of temples, nor blasphemers of your goddess.
    - Technically this was right, for neither man was the spokesperson for the Christian faith, which was Paul. But could this same statement be made of Paul, and of the Christian message and church as a whole?
    - Did the city clerk understand the Christian message sufficiently, and the implications of this message, or was he speaking in ignorance?
    - The Christian message having flourished in Ephesus for three years, and having undergone a revival just as of late, it is unlikely that a man in the position of city clerk would have been ignorant on these matters. So how could he say what he said about the Christian message and church?
    - The answer reveals to us the nature and character of Paul's three years of ministry in Ephesus. It was not so much contained in a message and a movement against Diana as it was contained in a message and a movement presenting the Lord Jesus Christ. If we may believe the city clerk, not a cross word was spoken against Diana, at least not in public ministry. Where the Lord Jesus Christ was embraced, Diana would automatically and silently fall by the wayside. Still today, the presence and the power of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ must replace the many idols that sit enthroned in the hearts of men and women. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can fill and still the restless hearts of men.
  2. The city clerk confirms what Luke belabors throughout the book of Acts; that is that the Christian message and Christian Church are no threat to civil order and authority. It is rather the enemies of the Christian Church that cause uproar and unrest. As such the city clerk of Ephesus calls Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen to order. The courts are open and there are proconsuls to decide these matters.
    - When we are tempted to resort to vengeance and violence, and distortion and misrepresentation of the facts, then we are no longer representing the Lord's kingdom, but rather our own. With the Lord Jesus on the throne we can repay evil with calm kindness and an honest representation of the truth, leaving the outcome to Him, giving Him freedom to work in His own way and time.