

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 13



PAUL VERSUS DIANA

Scripture Text: Acts 19:23-41

The peaceful evangelizing of Ephesus was over. With the defeat of the exorcists and the great bonfire of witchcraft books, the public became aware of Paul's work. The devil was stirred. It endangered the business of image making. Opposition arose against Paul and the church. Crowds gathered in wild uproar, not even knowing why they were gathered. They expressed loyalty to Diana, goddess of the Ephesians. The town clerk quieted the people.

Demetrius had a lesson to teach, it being that if Paul's teaching prevailed, no more shrines would be wanted. In our cities there are many trades which would be wiped out if Christ's Laws of life were adopted.

MEMORY VERSE: *Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God.*

—*Leviticus 19:4*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**John 4:1-14** Living water within.

Tue.—**John 14:15-27** Father, Son, Holy Spirit abide with us.

Wed.—**John 15:1-11** The vine and its branches.

Thu.—**John 17:6-26** Father, Son, people joined in one.

Fri.—**Ephesians 3:16-21** Christ dwelling in the heart.

Devotional Reading: John 6:47-65 Taking Christ into our lives.

A Meeting of Image Makers

Acts 19:23-27 There arose no small stir—agitation— **about that way**—the way of the Lord, Christianity. It was showing itself to be opposed to the local sins of idolatry. Demetrius, a maker of silver shrines—mostly small portable representations of the temple of Diana—called a meeting of idol makers and sellers. He pointed out that (1) the image business was their livelihood, (2) Paul had turned many away from images, (3) thus the business was in danger of destruction, and (4) the worship of Diana was in danger. These were strong reasons to those to whom money and the honor of Diana were first.

That man can invent and build an image and then put trust in it is strange. But it is a universal human weakness to do so. It is the beginning of images that we need to shun. The setting up of crosses, pictures, candles, Bibles, etc., as worship centers or shrines is a dangerous beginning of a sinful practice. Any *medium* of worship, a thing by way of which the worship is to travel between man and God, is wrong. God wants us to come directly to Him. He deals with man inside, not outside through articles and acts. So-called aids to worship only hinder worship.

Wrath and Riot

Acts 19:28-31 They were full of wrath. To show their loyalty and to arouse the people, they shouted, **Great is Diana of the Ephesians**. The voice of the people is seldom the voice of God. **The whole city** rose up, caught two of Paul's companions, and **rushed . . . into the theatre**—the common place of assembly. Paul wanted to go to the rescue of his two companions, but was kept from going there by the disciples and by a message from some friendly civic leaders, **chief of Asia**, asking him not to go. They were not Christians nor

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Jews, but men who had charge of the worship of heathen gods. Even the leaders of the opposition were becoming his friends. If Paul would stay in the background, something might be done to quiet the mob.

It takes courage and strength to oppose popular evils which are established in the customs of a people. If you need proof of this point, teach that there is no Santa Claus and that celebration of Christmas is a pagan custom, which it is, and has no place in the life of a Christian. Be ready for wrath and possible riot. What people are accustomed to, they come to think of as right. Especially do they resent any touching of their source of financial gain or their religion. Yet the Lord-ship of Jesus extends to all of life. If people are to be saved, all sinful practices are to be renounced. Paul shined the Gospel light clearly on all darkness, and strong saints were the result.

Violence and Confusion

Acts 19:32-34 Some . . . cried one thing, and some another. They came together for excitement and to follow the crowd, not for any reason or purpose. Great confusion resulted. **The more part knew not wherefore—why—they were come together.** Out of the confusion, they shouted for two hours, **Great is Diana of the Ephesians.**

God's method of operation is orderly, reasonable, and peaceable. False doctrine is marked by ignorance, confusion, and violence. Error profits by keeping people bound in ignorance and darkness. When opposed, it ridicules, lies, riots, and seeks to injure. Saints never need stoop to such methods. They have the Truth, which is light and the strongest defense. The Gospel of Christ is destructive to man's religions.

Exaltation of Diana, the Image

Acts 19:35-38 The town clerk, attempting to quiet the people, assured them that Diana's exalted position was unshakeable— **cannot be spoken against.** He mentioned the tradition that the image of Diana **fell down from Jupiter**, another of their false gods. He said the Christians were not **blasphemers of your goddess.** Here, for the sake of peace, he spoke words which were not the truth. Paul and the disciples had proven these statements false in their preaching against idols. The town clerk went on to inform the mob that there were proper channels of law for them to follow in settling the matter. The use of images in worship is sinful; read **Acts 17:29.**

Diana was a female idol of Ephesus. The head wore a crown. Each hand held a metal bar, and it stood on a block bearing inscriptions and animal figures. It was thought to have special sanctity. The image was supposed to have fallen down from heaven from Jupiter or Zeus, the supreme god of the Greeks.

Give an Account

Acts 19:39-41 Mob rule is never right. It is violence and injustice. It is best to settle grievances **in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar.** They needed to realize that they were in danger to give an account of their actions to not only the city officials, but also to God. Having quieted the people, the town clerk **dismissed the assembly.** All who live for God will meet many kinds of false doctrine, problems, and opposition. We need more than our own strength to meet them. When we have the Holy Spirit within us, we are promised power. We need knowledge of God's Word. It is **the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).** With the Word and the Spirit, one is thoroughly furnished to successfully win people from false worship to the Lord.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.

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