

## Knowing or Using God? (Acts 19:11-20)<sup>a</sup>

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### Context

1. Paul on his third missionary journey
2. Retracing much of his route on the second journey
3. Focus is not *evangelization* in new regions, but rather *discipleship*: building up the newly established churches
4. Found his way to Ephesus, where God opens a lengthy opportunity to teach—lasting over two years

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### Passage (Acts 19:11-20)

[11] Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, [12] so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. [13] Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” [14] Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. [15] And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” [16] Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. [17] This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. [18] And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. [19] Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned [them] in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and [it] totaled fifty thousand [pieces] of silver. [20] So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.<sup>1</sup>

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### Unusual miracles by Paul

1. [11] *Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, [12] so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.*
2. Healing at-a-distance through intermediate objects
  - A. Paul vs. Peter - What Peter did by apostolic authority so did Paul — this authenticates Paul’s apostolic authority (2Co 11:5, 11-12).
    - I. Both heal a lame man, Peter (Acts 3:6-7), Paul (Acts 14:8-10).

- II. Both impart the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, Peter (Acts 8:14-17), Paul (Acts 19:6).
- III. Both oppose a sorcerer, Peter (Acts 8:20), Paul (Acts 13:6-12).
- IV. Both worshiped, Peter (Acts 10:25), Paul (Acts 14:11-13).
- V. Both miraculously released from prison, Peter (Acts 12:7-11), Paul (Acts 16:26-29).
- VI. Both raise the dead, Peter (Acts 9:36-42), Paul (Acts 20:9-12).
- VII. Both render swift judgment, Peter (Ananias and Sapphira drop dead, Acts 5:4-5,9-10), Paul (Elymas the sorcerer blinded, Acts 13:11).
- VIII. Both have one complete sermon recorded by Luke, Peter (Acts 2:14-40), Paul (Acts 13:16-41)
- IX. Both entrusted with gospel to people groups, Peter to Jews (Gal. 2:7-8), Paul to Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal. 2:7-8).
- X. Both heal through indirect media, Peter via a shadow (Acts 5:15), Paul via handkerchiefs (Acts 19:11-12).

### 3. **Some ailments can be the result of demonic influence**

- A. *When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking [them], did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ. (Luke 4:40-41)*
- B. Evil spirits: **τε πνεύματα τὰ πονηρὰ** [*te pneumata ta ponēra*] (Acts 19:12)
- C. Woman with spirit of infirmity 18 years, healed by Jesus
  - I. *So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? (Luke 13:16)*
- D. Peter, preaching in the house of Cornelius
  - I. *. . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38)*
- E. As wonderful as modern medicine is, modern science's insistence on strict materialism—denying the reality of a spiritual realm—can only lead to mis-diagnosis in some

cases

F. There is always a cost to rejecting the truth of God's Word

## Seeking the things of God rather than God

### 1. Miracles drew attention of Jewish exorcists

### 2. Saw the healings, especially the exorcisms-at-a-distance by Paul

#### A. Sons of Sceva

I. *And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" (Acts 19:15)*

II. Essentially: I know the authority of Jesus and I know the authority of Paul, but what spiritual authority do you have?

III. Ἰησοῦν γινώσκω καὶ τὸν Παῦλον ἐπίσταμαι, ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνες ἐστέ  
[*Iēsoun ginōskō kai ton Paulon epistamai, hymeis de tines este*]

a. Jesus I know experientially (*ginōskō*), Paul I know about (*epistamai*), but who are you?

#### B. Drawn by the power/ability, no relationship, disconnected from the True Source

I. *We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches...* (Acts 19:13)

#### C. Simon the sorcerer

I. *And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money (Acts 8:18).*

### 3. Religion vs. relationship

A. Drawn to religious practices, symbols, but don't know God

B. Disobedient to God — unfamiliar with or, more often, unwilling to submit to God's authority

I. Busy about religious involvements - love "spirituality" and sampling various spiritual rituals and practices—even Christian ones

II. *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Mat. 7:21-23)*

III. Have no intention of knowing God, because doing so involves submission to His will

a. *He who does the will of My Father*

b. *You who practice lawlessness*

C. Have religion, but no relationship: *I never knew you*

#### 4. Hanging around the things of God, but lacking a true understanding of God

A. The Rabshakeh, representing Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, said to the Jewish people:

I. *But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' [is] it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'?* (2K. 18:22)

B. Modern examples - unbelievers quoting cherry-picked passages while admonishing true Christians what God is like or what He wants of us

I. "God is love"

II. "Don't judge"

III. *But to the wicked God says: "What [right] have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth, Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you?"* (Ps. 50:16-17)

5. These exorcists were not seeking God, but what God could do—they were seeking God's *hand* rather than His *face*

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### Spiritual authority of those who submit to the Ultimate Spiritual Authority

1. Different between Paul—who had authority at-a-distance—and the Jewish exorcists who were trounced in person

2. ***[17] This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. [18] And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. [19] Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned [them] in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and [it] totaled fifty thousand [pieces] of silver.***

3. The result: radical conversions

A. Serious initial steps toward sanctification (burning magic books)

B. Fifty thousand pieces of silver

I. “Fifty thousand days’ wages for a common laborer”<sup>2</sup>

II. “would have taken ten laborers twenty years to earn”<sup>3</sup>

III. At a minimum hourly wage of \$7.25, this would equal the staggering amount of \$2.9 million dollars today<sup>4</sup>

IV. Indicates how steeped in the occult Ephesus was in the day Paul ministered: “Ephesian letters” became a phrase applied to magical scrolls.

C. How many more magic books could we find on shelves today—especially of our young people—than 30 years ago?

D. Following Christ is not about your best life now—enhancing your present way of life as if Christianity is “this life plus Jesus”

E. Following Christ involves a radical departure from all those things which God hates—as He shows us

I. As in this instance: it may be sudden and dramatic

II. In other cases, it will be a gradual process of sanctification

III. But, if a believer is sensitive to the unction of the Spirit—they will learn not to resist when He “fingers” something in our live which we need to deal with: often by forsaking

IV. The longer we dilly-dally, the more we stunt our progressive walk with the Lord

V. If we really want all God has for us, why won’t we give up the things which keep us from spiritual maturity?

VI. Our perspective is askew: we are not properly assessing the cost of disobedience and the blessing of obedience

F. Following Christ *will* cost: it may be money, it may be reputation, it may be influence, or acceptance

G. *He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* (John [12:25](#))

H. In comparison with eternal rewards and our future life in glory, the ungodly things which hold us here are a fool’s trade

Sat Jun 8 21:34:57 2019



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#### Endnotes:

1. [Acts 19:11-20](#), NKJV
  2. [Ref-0089](#), [Acts 19:19](#)
  3. [Ref-0107](#), [Acts 19:19](#)
  4. 50,000 days x 8 hours/day x \$7.25 dollars/hour
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#### Sources:

- Acts 19:11-20** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0089** John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997).
- Ref-0107** Earl D. Radmacher, ed., *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997).
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#### Links Mentioned Above

- a - See [http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts\\_by\\_Tony\\_Garland/68\\_Acts\\_19\\_11-20/index.htm](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/68_Acts_19_11-20/index.htm).
- b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.