

God's Masterpiece

Acts 19:23-41, Ephesians 1-2 (masterpiece and temple)

Based on the NLT

Ephesus was a cultural, commercial, and religious center in Paul's world. The enormous temple of Diana, a powerful goddess, stood in the city as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Legend had it that Diana's image had fallen from the sky in that place. Ephesus' economy was built around Diana—people came from far and wide to visit the temple and to buy small silver idols of her, crafted by the silversmiths of Ephesus, and shaped like her image that was said to have fallen from the sky. This was the city into which Paul came and shared the Good News of Jesus.

Acts 19:1-10

When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he held daily discussions about God's Kingdom for close to three years. Many people believed, and as a result, people throughout...Asia...heard the Good News.

Acts 19:23-27

Then, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way of God. It began with...a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing the silver idols of Diana...He called the craftsmen together...and said,

"Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. 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! 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 Diana will lose its influence and that Diana...will be robbed of her great prestige!"

Acts 19:28-30

At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along...Paul's traveling companions...Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn't let him.

Acts 19:32-41

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...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 Diana, whose image fell down to us from heaven. Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess...I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting...since there is no cause for all this commotion...Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

Transition

Paul left Ephesus, but he continued to write and encourage the many believers there. In his letter to them, he said,

Ephesians 1:1 (19-23)

*... I am writing to God's...people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus...I...pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised *Jesus* from the dead *and gave him a place of power and authority over all things.**

Ephesians 2:1 (8-10, 19-22) (1:23)

Once you were dead because of your disobedience...But not anymore! God loves us so much that he made us alive when he raised Jesus from the dead! We are his masterpiece. We are crafted by him, and he breathes his Spirit into us, so we can do the things he has planned for us to do...We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for him, and filled with his Spirit.