

Series: **Collision Course.**

Session Two: **Christ Collides with the Spirit World.** Text: **Acts 19:8-20**

Introduction. This series focuses on one chapter in the book of Acts. Over the next 4 weeks, we will identify beliefs and practices that collide with the truth about Jesus. Studying how the gospel comes into a city called Ephesus, we will see that it challenges: wrong religion, the spirit world, profit margins, and popular culture.

When Paul walked into the great city of Ephesus, (population 250,000) it was not only one of the wealthiest & largest cities in the world, it was also filled with belief in magic, astrology, the supernatural, and a variety of religions.

Discussion. According to a June 2005 Gallup poll, about three quarters of Americans believe in the paranormal. Specifically, 41% believe in ESP, 37% in Haunted houses, 25% in Astrology, and 21% in Communication with the dead. Do you think this makes people more or less likely to believe in God? Why or why not?

Examination. Vv.8-10 It took three months of teaching before opposition pushed Paul out of the synagogue. Notice how it describes the rejection: obstinate, refused to believe, publicly maligned the Way. Does this suggest anything about those who reject the gospel?

Look at other instances when “The Way” is used to describe the church: Acts 9:1-2; 22:1-4; 24:14, 22. What are the implications of this name?

Paul’s two-year stint in the lecture hall involved daily discussions. One text reads that he taught from 11:00 am until 4:00 pm. This would have been the regular break time after morning work. Given Paul’s occupation (Acts 18:3), and his desire to support himself in the ministry (1 Thess. 2:6-9), we can assume Paul was also earning a living. Note how in 1 Corinthians 9:14-15, Paul sets the principle of paid preachers, but removes himself its application. Why would he do that?

Vv.11-12 Why would the word “extraordinary” be used in reference to miracles? Isn’t a miracle extraordinary by definition?

The handkerchief was literally the rag used to wipe away perspiration. The apron was worn on the job. Since it doesn’t seem that Paul planned this approach, why would God do miracles in this fashion? (Check out Matthew 9:20, 14:26, and Acts 5:15)

Vv.13-16 Those who tried to use Jesus name in dealing with evil spirits did not have success. What was the problem? What was missing?

Vv.17-20 Note that this is not a book-burning enforced by the church. This is a voluntary reaction to those desiring to deal with their sins. Why would destroying these items be better than just selling them?

Application. The emphasis of these incidents leads us to see:

There is only one great power, and his name is Jesus

Why do we need to appreciate the power of Jesus over hard hearts, evil spirits, and secret sins?

Are there ways that church people misuse or trivialize the name of Jesus?

Some Christians pay too much attention to the spirit world and others not enough. What is a biblical perspective on this?

Paul wrote to this church a few years later. Read Ephesians 6:10-15 in light of this story, and discuss the implications.

Do we need or should we expect “extraordinary miracles” today, for the spread of the gospel?

What other powers do we allow to have influence in our lives? How do the incidents at Ephesus speak to those things?

“Jesus! the name high over all, In hell, or earth, or sky; Angels and men before it fall, And devils fear and fly.” Charles Wesley