

**Paul's base of operation during his third missionary journey was Ephesus. When he arrived there, who did he encounter (v. 1)?** A group of about twelve men who professed to be disciples.

**What did he ask these "disciples" (v. 2)?** Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they first believed. Paul apparently realized that something was not quite right about their faith.

**How did they reply?** No, they had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit.

**What was Paul's next question and how did they reply (v. 3)?** "Then what baptism did you receive." They answered – "John the Baptist's baptism." This response told Paul that they had not experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and therefore they were evidently not saved because by this time in church history, everyone who believed in Jesus received the Spirit at the moment of his/her conversion (Romans 8:9).<sup>1</sup>

**How did Paul clarify their perspective on baptism (v. 4)?** Paul explained to these disciples, as Priscilla and Aquila had undoubtedly explained to Apollos, that John's baptism was good but insufficient. John the Baptist, similarly, had instructed his disciples to believe in Jesus who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

**How did they receive the news (v. 5)?** When these disciples of John heard that the Messiah had come, they believed in Jesus and were baptized in His name.

**What happened when Paul placed his hands on them (v. 6)?** Just like the new converts in Samaria (8:17), these twelve Ephesian disciples received the Holy Spirit when an apostle—this time Paul—laid his hands on them. This is the fourth distinct time in Acts when the Holy Spirit was given to various groups or people including both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2, 8, 10). The reception of the Holy Spirit in Acts does not follow any set pattern. Note that this is the last reference to speaking in tongues in Acts.

**What did Paul do for the next three months (v. 8)?** Paul followed his standard procedure of preaching to the Jews in the synagogue about the kingdom of God. By reasoning, we understand that he spoke to the intellect of the people. By persuading, he sought to influence their wills, especially with regard to faith in the person and work of Christ. Here the Jews were more tolerant than they had been in some other towns that Paul had evangelized, and he was able to continue speaking there for three months. Three months in a synagogue without a riot was something of a record for Paul.<sup>3</sup>

**How did the crowd respond (v. 9)?** Once again the old pattern of Jewish opposition arose (18:6). This time the Jews refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way, i.e. the Christian community. So Paul left them.

**What did Paul do in response?** He withdrew from the synagogue to a neutral site – the lecture hall of Tyrannus where he taught daily. Apparently Tyrannus made his lecture hall available to traveling teachers.<sup>4</sup>

**What was the end result of Paul's actions (v. 10)?** For two years the apostle made disciples and then sent them out to teach others also. Consequently, the whole province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles). Thus a great door of opportunity was opened to Paul, even though there was much opposition (1 Corinthians 16:9).

**What role did miracles play in Paul's life at this point (vv. 11-12)?** They were proof of his apostleship and authenticated the message he preached. So great was the power that flowed through him that even handkerchiefs or aprons which he touched would be carried away to the sick or demon-possessed and healing would result.

**What were several wandering Jewish exorcists doing at the time (v. 13)?** Invoking the name of Jesus over demon-possessed people to drive out the demons.

**Who was Sceva (v. 14)?** Whoever Sceva was, he was not a Jewish high priest who had held office in Jerusalem, because all their names are known; nor is it likely that he even belonged to a high-priestly Jewish family. It is possible that he may have been a self-styled 'high priest' of one of the innumerable pagan cults, who found that it paid to pass himself off as a Jew.<sup>5</sup>

**When the seven sons of Sceva were trying to exorcise a demon, what happened (vv. 15-16)?** Apparently two or more of Sceva's sons participated in an exorcism that backfired. They wrongly concluded that the simple vocalization of Jesus' name carried magical power.<sup>6</sup> The Evil spirit they were trying to exorcise recognized them as imposters. Instead of being exorcised of this demon, the possessed man became supernaturally strong and overcame all seven beating them. The seven ran out of the house naked and bleeding. They were taught a lesson about the danger of using the name of Jesus in their dabbling in the supernatural.<sup>7</sup>

**What impact did this encounter have on the people (v. 17)?** When news of this defeat of the forces of Satan became known in the surrounding area, a deep sense of awe fell on the people and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Note that it was not Paul's name that received the glory.<sup>8</sup>

**What further impact did this encounter have on the people (vv. 18-19)?** So mightily did the Spirit of God work among those who had practiced various forms of magical art that a great number turned to Christ, confessing their deeds. Then they made a public demonstration of their faith by gathering up their books that dealt with magic and burning them in a great bonfire. The original cost of the books would have been fifty thousand pieces of silver.<sup>9</sup>

**What was the end result (v. 20)?** The repentance and well-publicized renunciation of pagan practices caused the Word of the Lord to grow mightily and to prevail. The people took a clear moral stance and made a difference.

**What was Paul's plan at this point (v. 21)?** He determined to go back to Jerusalem via Macedonia and Achaia and after that he would also see Rome. His great heart of love and compassion was always reaching out to centers where the gospel could be planted and from which it could spread.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 389.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 410.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 400.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>8</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1644.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 1645.