

## That The World May Know: The Early Church – Session 4: The Mark of the Beast

### Conquering the Gates of Hell

Paul taught in Ephesus longer than in any other location he visited. By learning more about Paul's ministry in Ephesus, we can better understand what the Christians there faced and how God used them to spread his message throughout the world.

1. Paul immediately began in seeking out specific people and teaching them about the kingdom of God.
  - a. Who were the first people Paul taught? Why would Paul have chosen to teach them? What did he do for them? What impact might their encounter have had in Ephesus?  
Acts 19:1 – 7
  - b. Which group of people did Paul seek out next and why? What did he teach them? What impact do you think his ministry with them might have had in Ephesus?  
Acts 19:8 – 9
  - c. What was the third group of people Paul taught in Ephesus? Why would Paul have taught there? How much of an impact do we know his teaching had?  
Acts 19:9 – 10
2. The truth of the Gospel always undermines the beliefs of paganism. Paul's teaching was bearing fruit and challenging the status quo in Ephesus.  
Acts 19:11 – 31
  - a. In what ways did Paul's teaching and actions demonstrate God's power over Satan?

- b. What impact did this have on the two practices for which Ephesus was famous?
- c. What evidence do you see that the message of the Kingdom of God was changing the lives of people in Ephesus?

### Living as Imitators of God

With a population of nearly 250,000 and a reputation for being the richest city in the world, Ephesus was a trend-setting place—not unlike New York City or Los Angeles. Its seaport provided a key link in the Roman world between the East and the West and made it a center of political power. People came from all over to worship Artemis. Many people were demon possessed. People practiced magic and sorcery and celebrated emperor worship. Despite these seeming obstacles, the Gospel message found fertile ground in this pagan city where Christians stood for God and refused to acknowledge other deities.

1. Ephesus was a powerful center of evil in the ancient world, but as Paul and the Ephesian believers went about accomplishing God's work, God's power over evil was evident.
  - a. How did God demonstrate his power over evil through Paul?  
Acts 19:11 – 12
  - b. How did the name of Jesus come to be respected and honored throughout Ephesus?  
Acts 19:13 – 20
2. God's power was evident in Ephesus not only in miraculous and dramatic events, but in the everyday lives of the believers who

chose to stand strong for God in the midst of an evil culture.

- a. How did Paul instruct the Ephesian believers to live?  
Ephesians 5:8 – 20
  - b. In what ways would this lifestyle have demonstrated the power of God to people in Ephesus?
3. What is the source of a Christian's power to stand firm against evil?  
Ephesians 6:10 – 12
  4. How did Paul say the Ephesian believers could appropriate the power to stand their ground?  
Ephesians 6:13 – 20

### The Chutzpah Factor

In the Jewish culture of that time, the word *faith* had many meanings. One meaning was "bold persistence, unyielding intensity that will not give up," which is the same root for *faith* from which we get the Modern Hebrew word *chutzpah*. There is evidence that this Jewish understanding of faith in the ministry of Jesus and in the early Christians who were bold, determined, persistent, and unwilling to be stopped in their service to God. "*Chutzpah*" means supreme self-confidence.

1. Acting on one's faith with chutzpah was nothing new to the people of Jesus' day. How did Abraham demonstrate it in his walk with God?  
Genesis 18:16 – 33
2. What did Jesus teach His disciples about approaching God with chutzpah?  
Luke 11:5 – 13  
Luke 18:1 – 8

3. In what ways did the following people demonstrate chutzpah in the pursuit of Jesus, and what was Jesus' response?

Canaanite woman—Matthew 15:21 – 28

Bleeding woman—Mark 5:21 – 34

Paralytic and his friends—Luke 5:17 – 26

Blind beggar—Luke 18:35 – 43

4. What was the source of boldness for the early Christians, including those in Ephesus?  
Acts 1:6 – 9  
Acts 4:27 – 31  
2 Timothy 1:6 - 8

### Who Will You Worship as Lord?

Long before the Romans or Paul came to Ephesus, the people of Asia Minor had considered their rulers to be divine. Croesus, king of Sardis (550 BC) was honored as a divine king. Alexander the Great declared that he was the divine descendant of Heracles and Zeus. Inhabitants of cities he conquered were delighted to consider him a god and honor him with statues, festivals, and sacrifices. So the people of Asia Minor did not think it unusual when Roman emperors starting with Caesar Augustus, claimed to be divine.

1. What event concluded Jesus' final forty days on earth after His resurrection? Why, in light of the growing practice of emperor worship, was it important for Jesus' disciples to witness it?  
Acts 1:1 – 11
2. Paul wrote that he wanted Timothy to stay in Ephesus in order to stand against certain men who taught false doctrine. Based on what Paul emphasized in his final charge to

Timothy, what might have been Paul's concern?

1 Timothy 1:3

1 Timothy 6:11 – 16

3. In what ways does the fact that Roman emperors demanded to be worshipped as "lord" add to the meaning of Scripture?  
Romans 10:9  
Philippians 2:5 – 11
4. Why did God strike down King Herod? How might this event have strengthened the Ephesian believers in their stand against emperor worship?  
Acts 12:21 – 23
5. What was Paul's prayer for Ephesian believers who faced persecution from people who worshiped the Roman emperor and other false gods?  
Ephesians 3:14 – 21

### First Love

Believers in Jesus the Messiah are to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and mind and to love their neighbors as themselves. Matthew 22:37 – 40. So love for other people is a prominent sign that a person loves God. We know from our study that the believers in Ephesus truly must have loved God in order to remain faithful and obedient to him under the pressure they faced to do evil. Yet over time it seems that their love for one another grew cold.

1. What characterized the Ephesian believers when Paul wrote to them around 54 AD?  
Ephesians 1:15 – 16
2. What characterized the Ephesian believers when John wrote to them about 70 AD?  
Revelation 2:1 – 7

For what did John commend them?

For what did John criticize them?

The Ephesian believers had to be very careful to guard against the infiltration of evil, false teachers, and theological error in their community. How could this have led to a loss of love for their fellow believers?

3. How do we know that our love for one another is the evidence of our love for God?  
1 John 3:16 – 24  
1 John 4:7 – 21
4. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul outlined the body of believers was to be built up in love. How are we to love one another in the community of believers? What difference can it make?  
Ephesians 4:15 – 5:2

### References

Genesis 18	Deuteronomy 5
Matthew 4	Matthew 15
Matthew 22	Mark 5
Luke 5	Luke 11
Luke 18	John 13
Acts 1	Acts 2
Acts 3	Acts 4
Acts 8	Acts 12
Acts 13	Acts 14
Acts 16	Acts 19
Romans 10	1 Corinthians 13
1 Corinthians 15	Galatians 6
Ephesians 1	Ephesians 2
Ephesians 3	Ephesians 4
Ephesians 5	Ephesians 6
Philippians 2	1 Timothy 6
2 Timothy 1	1 John 3
1 John 4	Revelation 2

## Asia Minor

