

Acts
“Jesus” The Sequel
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“A case against Christianity”

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I.) Intro.

Apologetics is defined by Webster’s dictionary as, “*Defending by words or arguments*”.

Two of the best books, in my opinion, written for the defense of the Gospel are Lee

Strobel’s books, “*The Case for Christ*” and “*The Case for Faith*”. Here in Acts Luke is

not defending Christianity but rather he shows how others tried to offer a defense for, (to borrow Lee Strobel’s titles) “*The case for Diana*” and “*The Case for faith in Idol’s*”.

Unfortunately for the author, (Demetrius the silversmith), he ends up making a better case for faith in Christ than he does for the worship of Diana.

Folk’s as we start yet another year of serving Jesus together I am so thankful that I’m a part of this body. May the complaint of Demetrius against the Church of Ephesus be said of us; “*They have persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.*”

II.) Vs. 21-27 Four things the world hates about Christianity

Vs.21-22 Luke is giving us a little insight into the timing of the events that follow. “*After these things were accomplished*”. What Luke is referring to is the three months in the synagogue and the 2 ½ years’ daily teaching in the school of Tyrannus where “*all heard in Asia the Word of the Lord and it grew mightily and prevailed*” After the “*many who*

had believed came confessing and telling their deeds and those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.” Note this dear saints the Lord does not move us on until certain things are accomplished. Far too often we are running from something instead of running to Someone. I find it interesting here that before we are told of the riot in Ephesus Luke wants us to know that Paul had already “*Purposed in his spirit*” to be moving forward, all that happened afterward just confirmed the truth that was already in his heart.

So here is the run down:

- According to Rom. 15:25-31 and 1 Cor. 16:1-4 Paul’s plan was to travel through the church’s he had planted in Macedonia, (*Phillip, Thessalonica and Berea*) then through the Church’s in Achaia, (*Athens, Corinth and Cenchrea*) to strengthen them and collect funds for the famine stricken Church in Jerusalem.
- He wanted to spend the winter in Corinth before crossing the Aegean Sea after which he was going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, which is in May.
- In Romans 15:28 Paul writes to them that after “*I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.*” Paul planed on collecting an offering dropping it off for the Church in Jerusalem then he wanted to visit the Church in Rome and go all the way to Spain which was the furthest reach of the Roman Empire at that time.

To fulfill his desire he sends ahead Timothy and Erastus (*lovely, amiable*) so that the Church’s mentioned above would have adequate time to collect a love offering while Paul stayed in Ephesus for a time.

Vs. 23 Something is going to change these plans as Paul writes to the Corinthians “a great and effective door has opened to me (in Ephesus), and there are many adversaries.

Those “many adversaries” are also called “wild beasts in Ephesus” which Luke records for us in the remainder of this chapter saying, “There arose a great commotion about the way.”

Vs.24-27 Before we look at Demetrius’ **fourfold complaint against Christianity** a little back ground will help:

- **Demetrius** was a silversmith who appears to have been the head of a guild there in Ephesus. Their chief product was associated with the temple of Diana, which Luke tells us that they made “no small profit” from the sale of little silver idols in the shape the multi-breasted god.
- **The temple**: Was one of 33 shrines around the Roman Empire to this god making her by far the most popular. The temple to her in Ephesus was one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. It was located 1 ½ miles from the city and measured 400’ by 200’ or 80,000 square feet, supported by 127 marble pillars each standing 60’. The temple was excavated in 1869 and the main altar found in 1965.
- **Diana or Artemis (to the Greeks)**: Was the protector of the female youth and assisted in conception and child birth. She was considered a mother and guardian of girl’s coming of age. Just before marriage the young women would take a lock of their hair and their underwear (*that’s one way to get out of doing laundry*) and offer it at the temple along with models of the sexual organs. Her worshipped was held each spring around May for a whole month as the city gave its self over to a festival called “Artemision” which resembled today’s Mardi Gras in its wild partying. The

image that was fashioned into this multi-breasted idol was evidently made from a meteorite, (verse 35).

So here then is Demetrius' **fourfold complaint against Christianity**:

1. Vs. 25 **Prosperity**, *“Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade”*: The gospel Paul preached threatened the economic livelihood of the temple idol trade. Especially important as it was nearing the time when all of Ephesus would become packed with travelers for Diana's worship. Christianity was threatening the money being made upon enslaving people to passions and ignorance.
2. Vs. 27 **Popularity**, *“this trade of ours is in danger of falling into disrepute”*: Their popularity and the dependence people had upon them was falling away.
3. Vs. 27 **Power**, *“also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed”*: The hold that the goddess Diana had upon people was slipping through out Asia. The worship of Jesus was causing people to disregard superstitions.
4. Vs. 27 **Patriotism**, *“whom all Asia and the world worship”*: Ephesus popularity rested solely upon the temple, since her harbor was no longer usable because it was filled with silt thus too not take a stand for Diana was unpatriotic.

Folk's that is often the same accusations made against Christianity today:

- **Prosperity** :*“Hey, man if I become a Christian I won't want to party with my co-workers and bosses then I will be passed over for promotions!”*

- **Popularity** :*“It’s just not cool to hang out with the Bible thumpers and Church goers” “I mean everyone knows that the party is going to be in hell!”*
- **Power** :*“If I become a Christian no one will listen to what I want, I’ll have to follow God’s ways and not my own.”*
- **Patriotism** :*“If I become a Christian then I won’t want to hang with my old friends or they won’t want to hang with me.”*

Luke tells us that the commotion was over “***The way***” and Demetrius says that the gospel Paul preached persuaded many not to worship things that were made by hands. People started worshipping the creator instead of that which they created! There are **two important features of Demetrius speech that give a great view of how Christianity was superior to the worship of Diana:**

1. **What kind of god was Diana if her popularity could be defeated?** If Diana was so great that all of Asia and the world worshipped her then why is she not able to defend herself against Christianity? Today we would say, *“If Islam truly is the way to God then why do people have to be terrorized into worshipping Allah?”* Or, *“If evolution is truly how we came into being then why not have the facts presented alongside creationism in public schools?”* The fact that people are so against Christianity, that they won’t investigate it proves that they are afraid that it might be true! The worship of Diana today is gone and Christianity remains!
2. **How great is Jesus that He could defeat Diana without an argument:** Think of this, what did Paul and the other Christians do that put the silver idol trade in jeopardy? What caused so many to turn away from worshipping things made by human hands? Did they verbally attack the worship of Diana? Did they organize pick lines against the silver idol

trade? Did they chain themselves to the door of her temple? No, the Mayor tells us in verse 35, that they were neither, “*robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.*” How powerful is the gospel of Jesus that it can defeat any and every superstition or philosophy of man by just presenting the Truth and Love of Jesus. **You see man has a Christ centered key that only Jesus can unlock.**

The story is told of the Welsh revival of 1901 under the preaching of Robert Murray McCheyne that all the bars and pub’s went out of business without one message against alcohol ever being preached by him. Once people came to Jesus they just lost all interest in booze. **We don’t have to change the message for if the message is Jesus He will change us!**

III.) Vs. 28-34 Blind and staying that way

Vs. 28-29 Luke lists the way the world handled its objections to Christianity which are the same techniques used today:

- a. Vs. 28 “Full of wrath”: Think about this a minute, when Paul went into the synagogue and confronted the teachers there he opened a line of communication with them so that he could reason from the Word of God with them. But the world’s first ploy when they have no answers to the truths of Christianity is to **get mad**. “*Hey, now I’m mad what do you mean Jesus is the only way to heaven!*”
- b. Vs. 29a “Filled with confusion”: This theater sat around 25,000 people and Demetrius had given an emotionally charged speech getting people to think that Christianity was a threat to their “prosperity, popularity, power and patriotism of Ephesus.” What this produced in the crowd that was now a mob was confusion. When people don’t have answers to the truths of Christianity they **just bring about confusion**.

- c. Vs. 29b-31 “*Sized Gaius and Aristarchus*”: These two men were Paul’s traveling buddies that he had picked up in Derbe and Thessalonica. When the world has no answers to the truth of Christ they **attack the person because they can’t attack the message!** But unlike the World Paul is ready for a defense of the truths of Christ but some officials, (Asiarchs) who had become his friend pleads with him not to do so. These guys were elected officials who each city would elect to be oversee Roman festivals and games. Paul had some pretty important friends in this city otherwise Paul would have been attacked or killed.
- d. Vs. 32-33 “*Some cried one thing other another...they were confused and did not even know why they had come together*”: They were causing **disorder and public chaos** to lead people away from seeking out the truth for themselves.
- e. Vs. 34 “*With one voice they cried out four two hours*”: The last thing the world will do when it can not answer the truths of Christ is **unite together and try to out shout the truth**. You have all seen kids when they don’t want to hear what their parents are saying cover their ears and start shouting at the top of their lungs anything that will keep them from listening. That’s the only thing left for people to do against living the truth, shout it’s self hoarse.

This in a backhanded way proves the truths of Christianity are real. Why are folks so bothered if Jesus is not Who He claimed to be?

IV.) Vs. 35–41 The worship of fallen images

Vs. 35-40 Here we see how the Lord works through secular agents at times as this guy would kind of like our mayor today. He has three points that he makes to this ruckus crowd:

1. Vs. 35-36 *“Guy’s there is no need to shout. If old Diana is as powerful as you say then she can defend herself”*: Again we can just ask people why they don’t want to talk about the claims of Christ if they are so certain of the truth. I’d have to say to those who practice Islam, *“If what you say is truth, why do you have to use terror to get people to adhere to it?”*
2. Vs. 37-38 *“People, what are you screaming about when those that you accuse never did anything against your belief all they did was to proclaim something different!”*
The mayor’s point is if it’s a matter of words then stand and fight back with the truth of your position. Now of course they could not because they had no truth to their position. So I would challenge those who hold to an ideology other than the Word of God stand and defend your position!
3. Vs. 39-40 *“Folk’s it’s your behavior that is endangering the freedoms that you say Christianity threatens.”* **If the truth or religion is so great then the way a person lives what they believe ought to make me want to seek out the truth’s concerning it.** Let me put it another way, *“If the claims of all the beer commercials are true then what about all the alcoholics?”* *“If the truths about sex outside of marriage is true, what about all the sexually transmitted disease and ruined lives?”*

Vs. 41-20:1 The Mayor dismiss the crowd and Paul has to leave Ephesus which is what the world wanted, *“Just get those darn Christians out of the way”*, but Paul may have left but a strong church remained.