

Has Jesus Christ Taken Hold of You?

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[0:00] Ephesians 1 verses 1 and 2. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus.

! Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated.

Amen. Let's pray.

Oh Lord, we praise you that you speak. We praise you that your word prevails. We praise you, Lord, that you minister your word still now in a powerful way.

We pray, Lord, that you will do that through the preaching of the word. As we look back on this moment in redemptive history. As Christ is risen, ruling from heaven, his spirit has been poured out.

[1:13] And these are the acts of Christ through his Holy Spirit carried out by earthen vessels on earth. Through the apostles and through the churches that you planted.

We praise you for your glorious work, Lord. And we trust that we're not just reading history. We are reading an account of how our God works still today. We pray that as we study Acts 19, getting insights into Ephesians, that you'll encourage us, Lord, that these are your words, not just for that church at that time and that place, but these are your words for your church today.

Pray that your Holy Spirit will give us clarity, but even more, Lord, that your Holy Spirit will use your word to transform us, to topple over the idols of our hearts, to take hold of us, Father, and bind us to Christ more tightly.

And through your church, that you will impact the place where you have planted us at this time in redemptive history as well. We ask all of this for your glory alone in the powerful name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. To take hold of something means to completely arrest its natural motion, to grab it with absolute authority.

[2:34] To take hold means to grab a subject so thoroughly that it can serve no other master. That's what it means to take hold of something.

In our flesh, and if God had left us on our own, we spend most of our energy and our thoughts trying to take hold of things, thinking that'll make our lives better, or sometimes even trying to take hold of other people.

The gospel turns our tendency upside down. The gospel of Jesus Christ is truly good news, and it preaches to us that the best life is when your creator, your redeemer, takes hold of you.

Ephesians is an amazing letter. Ephesians is written by a man whom Jesus Christ had taken hold of.

That's Paul. Ephesians is a letter written to sinners whom Jesus Christ took hold of.

[3:43] That's the church. And Ephesians is sent through a city that Jesus Christ took hold of, and that's Ephesus. Ephesians is sent through a city that Jesus Christ took hold of.

We have evidence that Jesus Christ has complete dominion. He's taken hold of every aspect of ministry in this letter, just in these first two verses. And he lays out that sequence right there.

It's Paul. It's the church. And it's in Ephesus. And then just in the opening introduction, the name of Jesus Christ is front and center. Three different times Christ is exalted in this greeting.

My question for you and me today is our sermon title. Has Jesus Christ taken hold of you? Has Jesus Christ taken hold of you?

I hope to walk through mostly Acts 19 with those three spheres of Christ's authority. First of all, when Christ takes hold of a man, Paul.

[4:45] Second, when Christ takes hold of sinners, these men and women in this city. And third, when Christ takes hold of Ephesus. This is our Lord working.

He works still today. So first, when Jesus Christ takes hold of a man. When Jesus Christ takes hold of a man. In his greeting, Ephesians 1.1, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

By the will of God. God called Paul. God saved Paul. God appointed Paul to be an apostle, a messenger.

One who will speak on behalf of Jesus Christ. Christ. We hear about this commission from from Jesus Christ to Paul now being carried out in Acts 19, starting at verse 8.

We read this earlier in our service. Notice what this apostle of Jesus Christ does by the will of God. He shows up in the city, the city of Ephesus.

[5:50] But where he goes first in verse 8 is to the synagogue of the city. The synagogue most likely were set up beginning in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

So that you would have little outposts of the tabernacle or outposts of the temple. It's a place where they would have copies of the word of God in the Old Testament. Where this the space was set apart for the reading of the word of God, for teaching the people of God the law.

And now as the the Jewish people from Nashville, Israel, got scattered over all the world, even in cities like Ephesus within the Roman Empire, there are still synagogues. Places for these Jews to go and hear the word and receive the instruction of the Lord as they live outside of Israel.

It makes sense that this is where the ministry would begin, because in these synagogues, they have the word of God. They already have the Old Testament. They're not confused by the the worship of demons in the pantheon in the Greco-Roman world.

They know there is one true God, the creator. They know that this creator has promised to save a people for himself. They know that this is a God who is holy and just, but he's also full of mercy.

[7:02] And he's made a way for sinners to be forgiven their sins. What they don't know in these synagogues is that Jesus Christ is the one that God has promised all along. So this is the place where Paul goes as a missionary, beginning with the Jews and then to all the Gentiles who will hear the good news because it's for them as well.

And what does he do in the synagogue in verse eight? Paul spoke boldly. He stands up in the synagogue with the reading from the Old Testament and he preaches with boldness.

He does this for three months. Notice how he approaches this teaching in the synagogues. It's reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

Remember, Jesus Christ came announcing the kingdom of God and the expectations of the Jews in Israel were that Jesus could not be the Messiah because the way he is describing the kingdom did not match what they pictured.

They pictured him coming as a Lord triumphant and toppling over the Romans. And when the Romans crucified Jesus Christ, they mocked him. Look at this king of the Jews dying on a Roman cross.

[8:17] And Paul is now reasoning and persuading in this Jewish synagogue about the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. It's the ministry of Christ reigning from heaven, carried out through Paul.

In these first three verses, eight through 10, I picked up on four insights into ministry that have greatly encouraged me this week. And maybe they will you as well.

And that's the first one. Faithful ministry aims at the mind. You notice what Paul does. He argues and reasons and persuades concerning the kingdom of God.

Faithful ministry aims at the mind. The light of the mind then brings the heat of the gospel and warms up the heart. But first, the Lord has to teach and has to clear up wrong doctrine.

And having you experienced that as well, it's through sound teaching and reasoning and argument through the mind. The Lord does a powerful work in the heart. When you think of the structure of the letter to the Ephesians, that's exactly what he does.

[9:21] He reasons. He argues. And he shows the wonderful doctrine, the wonderful teaching about who God is and the glory of God to save sinners through Jesus Christ. Literally, it says he was bold, arguing, persuading, reasoning.

How often did he do this? Says daily. Daily. He's doing this. To discourse. Logically. To try to move people and sway believers by clearly presenting the facts.

Here's a second insight. Faithful ministry is both public and private. That's what he has to shift to next. He's here in a synagogue, a public place, but he has to make a shift because of what happens in verse nine.

Look at that. When some were hardened. So some within the synagogue, these Jews that are hearing Paul show the kingdom of God through the Old Testament, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Some in their hearts were hardened and did not believe. Instead, they spoke evil of the way before the multitude. All those who have gathered around and are hearing that Jesus Christ fulfills all that God promised.

[10:36] This multitude of people hearing Paul's arguments are now hearing Christians be mocked, being spoken evil of by these very Jews in the synagogue of Ephesus.

And so Paul departs from them. He goes to more private ministry, as our Lord often did. He withdrew the disciples, we're told. And he reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus. Some have described it as Paul setting up a seminary. Here are here are disciples of Jesus, ones who have believed in Jesus Christ. And they now likely at this batch is mostly through the synagogue teaching.

So many of them are are Jews. Now they're disciples of Jesus. It wouldn't stop with them. It would go to the Greeks as well. And he's reasoning daily with them. He's continuing to teach and to prove and to show.

We don't know many details about the school of Tyrannus. We don't know necessarily who this person named is. It could have just been a meeting hall. You know, it could have been a gym in a public school like this.

[11:41] It's a place to meet, to open up the scripture, to teach, to reason, to persuade about the kingdom of God to the disciples of Jesus Christ. It's a simple ministry.

It's opening up the word. When it says he did this daily, some some versions say every day. And the word for day refers to a specific time, like the hottest time of the day.

And so it was the custom where Ephesus is in ancient Turkey. And it was the custom in that part of the world when it's so hot outside, it's too hard to work hot to work outside. Everybody can come indoors and cool off.

So while people are cooling off, maybe in that window of 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., here's here's Paul's opportunity. You've got a break in work. I'm going to meet with you throughout the week as well. And I'm going to teach you about Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

This is what he set as an example. Later, the pastor in Ephesus would be Timothy. And Paul wrote to Timothy, commit these things, these doctrines, these glorious truths of our salvation to faithful men.

[12:47] Continue to disciple Timothy. Meet with him daily and trust these things to other men in the congregation. Faithful ministry is both public and private.

Number three, faithful ministry is persistent. I love verse 10, how it captures this for us now, summarizing the ministry of Paul in Ephesus. Look at verse 10 with me.

This continued for two years. Every single day. Studying God's word together. Arguing, reasoning, making disciples, entrusting these glorious truths to faithful men.

The Holy Spirit in true believers, giving them a hunger, a desire for the word of God. Setting apart other things that they could have been doing and saying, this is important for my soul.

I need to know Jesus through his word. Making it a priority. Coming together. And this they did for two years. Paul would later write to Timothy, preach the word.

[13:50] Be ready in season and out of season. There are going to be seasons where you are rejected, where Christianity is mocked. Preach the word. There are going to be other times where faithful disciples, even if it's one or two, they will come.

You open up the word. You give a space to me and they will come. It's in season and you preach the word in those times as well. The fourth insight into ministry is this.

The faithful ministry is measured by the message, not results. Faithful ministry is measured by the message, not results. This is how this little section finishes with the remainder of verse 10.

Look at that. So all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus. All who were in Asia, an entire region now hearing the message.

It doesn't say all in Asia believed and were baptized and joined the church, but they all heard the message. Paul to this part of the world was faithful. Faithful ministry is measured by the message.

[14:59] The message they heard was clear. Jesus Christ and his kingdom. Now, the Lord has those that he purchased. They will believe in his timing, but that's not the measure of success.

At least not how it's recorded right here. Now, we need a pause. If you're like me, one of the things this makes you wonder is how can such a statement be true? How is it that a man can go and preach in a synagogue for three months, then go to this rented hall with just a smaller group of disciples for two years every single day?

And by doing that simple labor, you can say all of Asia heard the gospel. Is this hyperbole? Did this really happen? And if so, how could it be?

Well, I want you to pretend like we get in an airplane together. This would be so fun if we actually could do it. We go to Denver International Airport. We fly. I don't know where you'd have to stop, but maybe you land in Istanbul and Turkey.

And then we get on. We could probably all fit in one chartered bus, maybe two if we want a spot to put our things. And we go to the coast to this port city.

[16:08] You see the harbor of Ephesus. And we can see these ancient ruins. We can have someone teach us about what it's like to be in Ephesus in the first century, the time when this church was planted.

Ephesus was a commercial and cultural center of that ancient world. It was the bridge between the Western world of the Roman Empire bridging all the way to the Eastern part of the world.

And it was thriving. There approximately this is not going to sound like a big number, but approximately a quarter million people. But you have to look at the comparison. It was the third largest city, even at a quarter million of the entire Roman Empire.

Number one, of course, was Rome, the capital. Number two is Alexandria in Egypt. Or yeah, North Africa. And then the third largest was Ephesus in Asia.

Politically, Ephesus functioned as the Roman capital for the Asian province. We get this insight when the riot breaks out. They say, hold on, we might get in trouble because we're having a riot.

[17:15] We're not allowed to do that here. Well, who would they get in trouble by? They're an outpost of the Roman Empire. It would be the Roman Empire saying you can't control your own people. We're going to have to charge you more tax money and send more soldiers to enforce it for you.

Everybody's heard the expression that let's see if our middle schoolers and high schoolers can finish this sentence. All roads lead to. Go ahead and say it out loud.

All roads lead to. Parents, help them out. Rome. There we go. All roads lead to Rome. But what I learned in studying about Ephesus is there was an equally famous expression, at least in Asia.

And it was this. All roads lead from Ephesus. This is why Paul could set up his ministry in Ephesus and make inroads and send messages and get the word out to all of Asia from this one hub.

Culturally, it was a very advanced city. In fact, if you were to look at those ruins as we walk around with our boots on, we try to hike and see what we can see and take pictures.

[18:23] We would come down a slope like this and we would see built into the bank of the hill a giant amphitheater. You know what an amphitheater is? It's like open seating, you know, made with stone where you can sit and look down at a stage or a focal point.

It's like our Red Rocks here is an open theater like that. But this one was large. It could hold up to 24,000 people. Ephesus also had medical training school that trained some of the most famous physicians in the ancient world.

It also had world-renowned public baths and gymnasiums. Ephesus was the place to be. If you're traveling through Asia, this is the big city.

Asia hosted, on behalf of all of Asia, basically Olympic Games. It was called the Koina Azias, the Common Games of Asia. Instead of going to, you know, to the Greek islands and being part of the Greek Olympics, you could go for Asia to Ephesus and be part of this every year.

And so here from this strategic point, the Lord is ministry. Our Lord Jesus Christ grabbed hold of Paul. Our Lord Jesus put Paul on a path to bring the gospel to all who have an ear to hear.

[19:42] The Lord grabbed hold of this man. He put him there for however long it's going to take to make disciples and entrust these doctrines to my disciples in this city. Be faithful in the ministry of the word, Paul.

I love how this little section saying that the gospel was heard by all in Asia. Look closely there, verse 10.

Both Jews and Greeks. The Lord's bringing to his discipleship, to this early church plant in Ephesus, represented us from all of the nations in this region.

And this makes sense when Paul sends his greeting, which we read, Ephesians 1, verse 2. He writes to this church now, continuing that. He says, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This church now made up of Jews and Greeks with Jesus Christ as the head. He's gotten a hold of all of them. He's bound them together under Christ the head. And he says, grace to you.

[20 : 43] And that phrase, charis, it sounds a lot like the ancient Greek greeting. We'd say, hello or hola, you know, oi, depending on the language. But if you're in the ancient Greek world, you would say this word that sounds a lot like grace.

And if you're a Jew from thousands of years prior, when you see someone, you guys know what you would say, right? Shalom. Very good. So he's putting those two together. Grace to you, I'm greeting you.

Referring to the Greek greeting in shalom. You know, the Jews and Greeks together. And it's only possible from God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, just as when John wrote the letter called Revelation, and it's sent through these seven churches of Asia Minor.

It follows that same circuit where a courier would get on a horse and they would carry it from one city to the next. Most likely this letter to the Ephesians was for a broader circular audience as well.

We don't know of any occasion. There's not like a wrong teaching necessarily in Ephesus at the time. There's not a big fight or dispute or division among the church. He's writing them the glorious gospel that binds them together in Christ.

[21 : 56] Not only them, but all of Asia, we could say represented by these seven major cities. You see what happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of a man.

When Jesus Christ takes hold of a man, the kingdom of God becomes his greatest concern. When Jesus Christ takes hold of a man, the desire to obey Jesus Christ boldly.

That desire swallows up any fear of enemies. Did you notice when Jason read this earlier? There's a big riot in that amphitheater, potentially 24,000 people, the whole city in an uproar.

And Paul wants to get in there. His instinct is to go in the middle of that riot and preach Jesus publicly to them. He wants to obey Jesus boldly. And that swallowed up his fear of enemies.

When Jesus Christ takes hold of a man, the disapproval and evil words of unbelievers do not stop you from continuing on in the ministry for the long haul.

[23 : 02] When Jesus Christ takes hold of a man, your life is joyful and unstoppably his. You belong to the Lord.

Has Jesus Christ taken hold of you? Well, second, what happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of sinners? What happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of sinners?

That's what these people in Ephesus were, by the way. See, the church is made up of saved sinners, as we say every single week. Many of the Christians in Ephesus had once been under the spell of this city's dark witchcraft.

This is what Ephesus was most famous for. Ephesus was not only the political and cultural gateway of Asia. It was also the center of the ancient world for magical practices and witchcraft.

One historian wrote, Of all ancient Greco-Roman cities, Ephesus was by far most hospitable to magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans of all sorts.

[24 : 13] That means there are people here really dapplying with demons. Having these religious transactions with Satan and fallen angels. We'll give those demons what they want, and maybe in turn they'll give us what we want.

That was really happening in Ephesus. And then a bunch of other people around that trying to just make money by faking it. Both were going on. In fact, you could make a trek over to Ephesus now, and if you left one of those other cities of Asia Minor, And you could buy what was called the Ephesia Gramata.

And we would translate that as Ephesian letters. It's amazing how some of the movies coming out now that are all about magic, It's like letters and movement of letters forming words.

Well, that's what the Ephesia Gramata were. They were letters that you could buy. You could actually take them and use them kind of like you would pieces on a board with separate letters trying to form words.

And you could make them into charms and keep them on your person for good luck or to try to help you. These Ephesian letters, in some cases when it's a demonic influence, not just someone faking

it to make money, They would invoke for you the protection of evil spirits and help you in special circumstances.

[25 : 35] People would travel from all over Asia to Ephesus to buy these to make sure they were getting legitimate ones. The story goes in the history records at one of those Asian games that a wrestler was winning all of his matches undefeated, uncontestable.

He was like the best jiu-jitsu fighter there was. But then the judges noticed that around his ankle there was a small parchment. And when they opened it up and removed it, they saw on this parchment were some Ephesian letters on it.

And they banned him. You can't keep fighting with those on your ankle. And he lost the very next match. You see why such an industry developed in the city of Ephesus around this practice.

But Jesus Christ, as we've read here, he demonstrates his power over the forces of darkness, over the principalities of the powers of the air.

It's what Ephesians 6 is telling them. This battle, this warfare is real. But Jesus Christ is more powerful. Jesus Christ calls his disciples out of a dark city just like that.

[26 : 47] A city ruled by demons. And not everyone involved with this stuff was faking it. We read about how there is a man that was possessed by a demon.

And then that demon attacks those Jews who were trying to cast him out and had no power because they didn't know Jesus. And the demon leaves them naked and beaten up and walking away wounded.

All seven of them. So you can ask them if demons are fake or if they have real power. Jesus Christ overpowers all forces of darkness.

Look at Acts 19 verse 17. The power of the name of Jesus through the ministry of Paul. Look at verse 17. It became known both to all the Jews and the Greeks dwelling in Ephesus.

It's a quarter of a million people that know the power of Jesus through the ministry of Paul here. And fear fell on them all. The entire massive city now.

[27 : 51] Fearing the name of Jesus. And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. What God did through this man that Christ took hold of Paul and his ministry of the word day after day with the disciples that God brought there.

It brings glory to the name of Jesus in the entire city. Verse 18. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

And many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together. We only know the little scraps of information of what these books might have been.

But you can imagine. These are books with which you dabble with demons. And what did they do with these books? They burned them. Imagine the church coming together.

Confessing sin. Trusting in forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Who topples over these idols. And then they go out there and make a big bonfire together. They burned those books in the sight of all.

[28 : 56] We worship as a family. We're disciples here in private. But our witness is in the world and it's unashamed. It's public. They counted up the value of what they burned.

And it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver. I looked up the buying power of that much silver at that time. And one estimate was \$30,000 in today's currency. And how was it that Jesus Christ took hold of these magic practicing demon manipulating sinners in Ephesus?

Who he called and said, you're my children now. You belong to me. Verse 20. Look at that. It was by his word. It's by the ministry of his word.

The word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Forces of darkness could not stop it. Could not overthrow God ministering through his word.

[29 : 58] The church is made up of saved sinners that were and still would be lost, confused, and angry like this mob in Ephesus. But Jesus Christ takes hold of each one of them.

He snatches you and me just like them also away from the clutches of Satan. He writes to them in Ephesians chapter 2. You once, church. You once, church.

You once walked according to the course of this world. He means that world. That dark pagan world in Ephesus. According to the prince of the power of the air.

The spirit who is at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom. Also, we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our own flesh.

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And were by nature children of wrath just as others. That's who you were, church. You and me. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his

great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

[31 : 10] He saved us by his grace. He raised us up and made us sit together in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Jesus, that's who you are now, church.

When Jesus Christ takes hold of sinners, he overpowers any other influence in our lives, doesn't he? When Jesus Christ takes hold of sinners, we come to see him with eyes of faith for the first time.

And his glory is magnified to us. When Jesus Christ takes hold of sinners, many who believe come to the church, confessing their sins, telling their evil deeds that they had been part of.

And they do this to make it right and to be assured of their pardon by Christ's powerful blood. When Jesus Christ takes hold of sinners, they confess their sin and they forsake their idols and they destroy those things that keep them from enjoying peace with God.

When Jesus Christ takes hold of sinners, his word grows mightily in them. And his word prevails in his church.

[32 : 27] His word keeps his people close to him. Has Jesus Christ taken hold of you? Well, third and finally for today, what happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of a city?

We've seen what happens when he takes hold of one man, Paul. And what happens when he takes hold of sinners, the church that he now calls saints? What happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of a city?

We read in Acts 19, starting at verse 23, that about that time there arose a great commotion about the way.

Jesus said, I am the way. This refers to being a follower of Christ. Being a follower of Christ causes a great commotion in a pagan city.

And then he tells what happened in Ephesus specifically in verse 24, a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana.

[33 : 38] And this brought no small profit to the craftsmen. This man worked with silver and a bunch of other craftsmen apparently worked with him as well.

They most likely had some kind of union or guild. And this was a massive threat. If they're to do a SWOT analysis of their business and five-year forecast of revenue, this is devastating.

This is not going to be good. Because Ephesus was not only an incredible commercial and cultural center, it was also the religious center of all of Asia.

Just like any other Roman city, there would be a pantheon of gods. There would be a number of different temples. And you can say that any of them might help you. Go to any one of these different pagan gods and they're all okay with you worshiping a bunch of different gods.

You might have your favorites, but you see what you can get back from each one. But in Ephesus, there was one primary goddess, one primary temple.

[34 : 43] It was the religion of Ephesus. It was called the worship of Artemis. Artemis was her Greek name, Artemis of Ephesia.

But the Roman name was Diana. Diana of Ephesus. And this worship of Diana, it was a manipulation of demonic powers.

They used her as the face or the front of this false worship. And it was associated with a myth about the founding of the city of Ephesus. Their myth goes that these Greek goddesses called Amazons, which were giant warrior women, founded the city.

And if you were to go to the temple of Diana, you would be able to minister through now someone who had the power of the demon behind this temple.

To bring out the blessings and the help or the curses on your enemies that you need. She was like the goddess of fertility. And it was a place to go if you want whatever you're doing to prosper and multiply.

[35 : 54] It was a place of cult prostitution. Some of the worst sins you could imagine all around this temple of Diana. Throughout the Roman Empire, people would travel to Ephesus specifically to go to this temple.

It was famous not only in Asia, but in all the world. And if you couldn't go all the way to Ephesus, you could still buy at any one of these other Roman cities a little statue or amulets with Diana on it. So this was a international silversmith business that they had with their statues. So this man, Demetrius, he in verse 25 calls all these people in this industry together with the workers of similar

occupation.

Make this as big as he can. And he said, men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover, you see in here that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, there's witness right there from an unbeliever that the word of God, the gospel spread to all of Asia.

This Paul has persuaded. See, that was how Paul's ministry was described. He's reasoning and persuading. Demetrius said it worked. And he's turned away many people saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

[37 : 13] So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute. But also the temple of the great goddess of Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed.

Don't you see the implications of this? Whom all Asia and the world worship. Now, when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out.

Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Crying this out over and over for two hours. What is the name of this temple that he's worried about protecting?

The magnificence of Diana being despised. People will stop traveling here to her temple and buying what we have to sell. This temple was called the Artemision with her Greek name, Artemis.

The Artemision. It was the temple that housed this horrible image. They claimed with the founding of this this temple and this worship in Ephesus that the the Amazon warriors had this this image fall from the sky.

[38 : 24] And it was a symbol of fertility. It was a figure of Artemis that was supposed to be worshipped and venerated. And if you could get close to it, then you are having direct contact with the power of the forces of the air.

It fell from the sky. This temple around this image of Artemis. This temple was massive. It was the largest structure in all of the ancient world.

And it was made entirely out of marble. If you go to a very fancy, you know, like hotel or restaurant or something like that, you can see a marble countertop.

That's just a slab of marble. But can you imagine the largest building built in the ancient world made entirely out of marble? That's what it would be like to go to the temple of Diana in Ephesus.

It was 220 feet wide, 420 feet deep, and it stood with 127 marble columns that each reached 60 feet high.

[39 : 30] 127 marble columns. There's the Greek influence, the Greco-Roman influence. Each of those 60 feet high. A basketball hoop is how high? 10 feet.

Someone told me these are maybe nine, but basically 10 feet. So stack up that 60 feet high. And there's 127 of those columns around this temple of Diana.

It was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. And the Ephesian pride in their temple was so great. One historian noted that when Alexander the Great went on one of his campaigns, he said, Everything we conquered, all the spoils of war in the east, I will give to the city of Ephesus in exchange for you allowing me to put my name, Alexander the Great, on the temple of Artemis.

Do you think the Ephesians went for it? No way. This is our temple. This is what we are known for. They declined his offer. They would not give him that honor.

And they said that none but the name of Ephesus would appear on this temple to Diana. And so here's the great crowd. So big they have to go to that amphitheater that holds 24,000 people all shouting, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

[40 : 51] Look at verse 29 of Acts 19. So the whole city was filled with confusion and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized these travel companions of Paul.

Look at verse 32. Some therefore cried one thing and some another for the assembly was confused. Most of them did not even know why they had come together. We just know we're angry. Verse 34. All with one voice cried out for about two hours. Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Do you see what happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of a city?

The powers of the city are exposed. The forces of darkness are shown to be nothing. Christianity is the most reasonable faith.

Paul reasoned with them from the scriptures. And it turns a whole city upside down. In Ephesians chapters 4, 5 and 6. Paul is going to preach to the church in the city of Ephesus that Christ is your head.

[42:04] He is your savior. You are his body. Paul's going to write to the church. I am a prisoner of the Lord. He's writing this letter to them now from imprisonment in Rome.

And he tells them. I beseech you to walk in a way worthy of the calling with which you were called. With all lowliness and gentleness.

With long suffering. Bearing with one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit by the bond of peace.

That's what happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of a city. He has a city within a city. He has his church. His disciples. His people.

And they look the opposite of the world in these ways. He tells them. Be strong in the Lord. And in the power of his might.

[43:00] Put on the whole armor of God. That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. You see it all around you. But you'll be strong in the Lord.

When Jesus Christ takes hold of the city. The monetizing of demonic influence dries up. There's no more profit to transacting with demons.

When Jesus Christ takes hold of a city. Those who had most to gain from Satan's rule. Become infuriated. When Jesus Christ takes hold of a city.

The servants of Christ are often the ones who will suffer. And their suffering. Their punishment will often be unjust. When Jesus Christ takes hold of a city.

His church is invading enemy territory. The advancement of the kingdom of God through his church. Christ rule from heaven through his church.

[44:01] It's an advancement of a real battle. With real casualties. But King Jesus reminds his church. That he is their head. King Jesus reminds you and me.

His church that he is with us. He is washing us. And he will clad us with his armor. The armor of the gospel. With him as our head.

With us. Upholding us. Armoring us. The church will stand. Even in a dark city like Ephesus. Or where God has planted us right here at this time.

You see what happens when Jesus Christ takes hold of people like you and me. It's the best life. It's a short life.

And it's preparation for the life to come. My encouragement to you and to me and teach one of us today. Is make sure that Jesus Christ has taken hold of you today. Let's pray.

[44:59] Let's pray. Lord we praise you. That you are powerful. Above every other force. You're at work Lord. We thank you that you speak to us.

And you show us your glory. How you're not done working. How there are those who are lost. Who are sinners. But you purchase them with your precious blood.

And you will call them to yourself. You will rule over them Lord. There are strongholds of the enemy that you will topple over. There are demons that you will cast away.

There are idols that you will throw down and shatter on the ground. We pray that you will do that Lord. In our lives. Within our households. Within this church. And within this city.

In this state. Where you've planted us. Help us to bear witness to the power of Jesus Christ. We pray that your spirit will keep us united in him. That you'll teach us to live.

[45:54] As faithful disciples. Right here where you've put us for this time. We trust that you will for your glory. Amen.