



ACTS: ENDS OF THE EARTH ACTS 19:21-40

STUDY GUIDE
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ACTS 19:21-40 ESV

21 Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. 23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. 25 These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 26 And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship." 28 When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. 30 But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. 31 And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. 32 Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 35 And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." 41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

STRUCTURE

- I. **Paul's team plans their travel schedule in partnership with the Spirit (21-22)**
 - a. Paul resolves in the Spirit to ultimately reach Jerusalem and Rome (21)
 - b. Paul sends helpers to prepare the churches for his arrival (22)
- II. **A disturbance arises (23-34)**
 - a. A worshiper of Artemis and the Mammon god stirs up the crowd and condemns the Way (23-27)
 - b. The city is filled with confusion and violence (28-29)
 - c. Good friends prevent Paul from entering the fray (30-31)
 - d. The chaos intensifies (32)
 - e. The Jews make a failed attempt to quiet the crowd (33-34)
- III. **The disturbance is dispelled (35-41)**
 - a. A town clerk quiets the crowd and exonerates the Way (35-40)
 - b. The crowd is dismissed (41)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Verses 21-22 introduce a broader theme, which will last until the end of the book: Paul's trip to Jerusalem, followed by Rome. Despite the persecution he will suffer, it is a work of the Holy Spirit (v. 21). God doesn't always lead us down yellow brick roads.

On that note, we must know: when God works, the devil works also. Ephesus had just experienced a mighty revival, with converted sorcerers and spell-casters burning their books and amulets. Through preaching and miracles, God leveled the powers of darkness—but they resurfaced quickly. Until Jesus returns to vanquish these cosmic powers for good, they will persist.

They persist in Ephesus through the incitement of yet another mob (there are many in Acts), which almost leads to Paul's demise. The mob is stoked by Demetrius, a silversmith, and a wealthy business leader. Like most wealthy businessmen, Demetrius is smart. For those who craft idols, revival means recession. So Demetrius gathers some rabble-rousers, and he delivers a passionate appeal. His speech feigns concern for the goddess of Ephesus, Artemis in Greek, or Diana in Latin. His real concern, however, is with another god: the one Jesus calls, "Mammon." Unlike the cultural deities of ancient Rome, "Mammon" transcends every culture. Many Americans bow out that altar.

Paul is not one to shy away from conflict, but sometimes you have to choose your battles. You also need to choose good friends. Paul's Christian brothers and his friends in high places talk sense into him: "Paul, you're no match for a mob." Paul uncharacteristically fades into the background. This story isn't about him. It's about a conflict between the powers of light and darkness. Darkness incites mobs that are filled with confusion, but light reveals. In this case, light reveals the unreasonableness of pagan worship and the peace-filled logic of the Way.

As we observed in Corinth, a pagan city official again comes to the rescue. He's able to quiet the crowd and dispel the chaos. Part of his appeal hinges on the reasonable behavior of the disciples. In Luke's narrative, this functions as a defense of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Despite holding vastly different views, Christians are not subversive, but peaceful. As believers in Jesus, we likewise must learn how to shine our light in a way that pierces darkness, but without escalating unnecessary conflicts. In a world as polarized as ours, this is no small task.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

21 Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

—"Now after these events":

- After the book-burning revival, there's a blood-thirsty riot. By God's grace, no blood is shed. Paul is spared by the intervention of discerning friends. We all need those.
- You can't disturb the cosmic powers of darkness, as Paul did at Ephesus, without the pushback of human puppets. Those who serve the powers of darkness will throw a hissy fit when light disrupts darkness.
- Righteous revivals and unrighteous riots erupt like twin volcanos.

—"Paul resolved in the Spirit"

- "resolved": This word is normally translated, "laid down," as when a body is laid in the tomb. Figuratively, Paul "laid down" or "settled" in his mind—as firmly as a corpse laid to rest—that he would head through these cities, culminating in Rome.
- "in the Spirit":
 - Paul resolved the matter, but in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.
 - Did the Spirit initiate this or Paul? It reads as if Paul initiated it, but the Spirit affirmed or confirmed Paul's plan. It could also mean that Paul sought the Spirit's will and then resolved to fulfill what he discerned.
 - Paul resembles Jesus, who "set His face" toward Jerusalem in Luke 9:51. Like his Lord, Paul would be arrested in Jerusalem—"the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it" (Luke 13:34).
 - Both passages remind us of the suffering servant of Isaiah. Jesus fulfilled the passages about this servant, but now the church steps into that role. In Isaiah 50:7, we read that the servant sets his face "like a flint." To have a hardened face means that no persecution can deter you (cf. Ezek. 3:8-9).
 - The Spirit will continue His involvement in Paul's journey to Jerusalem:
 - Acts 20:22-23: "22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me."

- The disciples of Tyre (21:4), Philipp's four daughters (21:8-9), and Agabus (21:10-11) all prophesied by the Spirit in the lead-up to Jerusalem. We'll discuss those texts when we get there.
- The Spirit's communication gets stronger as Paul journeys forward with Jesus. This is true for us too. One way to discern whether a message is from the Lord: does the burden dissipate or intensify? If God is speaking about something significant, it tends to intensify.

—"Macedonia... Achaia... Jerusalem... Rome":

- Paul's ultimate destination was Rome, and his penultimate destination was Jerusalem. Like Jesus, Paul wanted to testify to the Jewish capital. However, he ultimately sought an audience with Caesar in Rome (cf. 25:11).
- His visits to Macedonia and Achaia would have granted him the opportunity to strengthen the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth.
- In addition, his route through these locations enabled him to collect offerings for the poor churches of Judea (cf. Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:25ff; 1 Cor. 16:1-8; 2 Cor. 8-9).
- His chief destinations of Jerusalem and Rome remind us of the prophecy made about Paul at his conversion:
 - "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles **and kings** and the children of Israel'" (Acts 9:15).
 - Paul would soon speak before numerous governmental leaders: **Governor** Felix (Acts 24), **Governor** Festus (Acts 25), and **King** Agrippa (Acts 26), as well as the **emperor** in Rome (implied, 25:11).
- "sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus":
 - We all need "helpers". We were not made to do ministry alone. Paul "sent" these two men, suggesting a high level of trust. Distrust between ministry partners is like viscous oil in a car. Paul trusted his team to represent him well in the churches of Macedonia.
 - Because he could trust them so well, he was able to "stay in Asia for a while," continuing his ministry there.
 - Timothy was Paul's spiritual son. Erastus was the "city treasurer" (Rom. 16:23) in Corinth. He held a civic position. Later, when Paul moved on from Corinth, Erastus stayed behind, continuing to serve the church (2 Tim. 4:20).

23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.

—When "the Way" makes waves, we should expect "no little disturbance".

—As has been the case throughout Acts, there is almost always one "rabble rouser"—whether an individual or small group that incites the mob.

—"Demetrius":

- As a "silversmith," he would have fashioned idols of Artemis (Latin: Diana).
- Here, he is said to create "shrines"—a word normally rendered "temple" or "sanctuary." While he no doubt created literal idols, he seems also to have built miniature temple replicas, perhaps for bowing to and worshiping. Either way, it would have facilitated idolatrous worship.
- "no little business" matches "no little disturbance". This parallel indicates the primary reason for Artemis's grievance: it was economic.
- "to the craftsmen": Artemis seems to have been a leader among the craftsmen, a businessman so successful that he elevated everyone's profits.
- Ramsay (qtd by Stott) says he was "probably Master of the guild [of silversmiths] for the year."

—The temple of Artemis or Diana was four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens and one of the "seven wonders of the ancient world." Schreiner's commentary quotes Antipater of Sidon about the splendor of the temple in 140 BC, and it is stunning: "I have set my eyes upon the wall of lofty Babylon on which lies a chariot road, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the nagging gardens, and the Colossus of the sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I

saw the temple of Artemis which rose to the clouds, these other marvels lost their brilliance, and I exclaimed 'Lo, apart from Olympus, the sun has never looked upon aught so grand.'

—Artemis was "The Queen of Heaven." The Jews sometimes fell into worshipping the Queen of Heaven in their history (Jer. 7:18; Jer. 44:17-19, 25), although it was not for them a reference to Artemis. This title has typically been assigned to various female deities. For this reason, it should concern us that Roman Catholic dogma calls Mary, "Queen of Heaven."

25 These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 26 And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

—Demetrius gathers "workmen in similar trades," and comments on "our wealth," proceeding then to highlight the "danger" to "this trade of ours." From there, however, he makes this not just an economic issue but a worship issue. Given his initial interest in finances, however, his concern for Artemis's "magnificence" sounds feigned. At the end of the day, the worship he's truly concerned about is that of Mammon.

—Jesus says, "You cannot serve two masters. Either you will love one and hate the other, or you will despise one and love the other. You cannot serve both God and Mammon." Jesus narrows all the polytheistic options down to two: God and money. Demetrius illustrates this point. Whether you claim to worship Yahweh or Artemis, your pocketbook explains the god you truly revere. Do you worship the God of Mammon? Or do you worship the One True God through financial sacrifices of wealth.

—Every g/God is worshiped through sacrifice. The Pharisees were "lovers of money" (Luke 16:14) with great theology. Theology doesn't save us—faith does. Faith can be measured by how much we're willing to sacrifice financially for God.

—"gods made with hands are not gods":

- There is a huge theme in Scripture about gods and also temples made by human hands. In contrast, the true God is uncreated. Anything you have to create, by nature, cannot be the Creator.
- Our Creator God fashioned the earth as a cosmic temple, which Adam defiled as humanity's representative. Jesus came to create a new temple, the church (Eph. 2; 1 Pet. 2); He's coming again to re-create the universe as a cosmic temple (Rev. 21-22).
- The story of the Bible, from beginning to end, is a story of unhindered fellowship between creatures and the Creator, with the former worshipping the latter. When that fellowship was broken by the First Adam—the first "temple-keeper"—it was mended by Jesus, who rebuilt the temple as the church, and ultimately, new creation.
- The central reality of my story and yours is a worship story. The question is not whether we worship but what we worship. Our finances tell that story.

28 When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. 30 But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. 31 And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. 32 Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.

—"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians":

- This refrain appears in both v. 28 and v. 34. The outcome after v. 28 is that "the city was filled with the confusion..." The outcome after v. 34 is that they silenced all opposition for two hours. In short, their slogan opposes all sense and reason.
- I'm reminded of the slogans in our world, which shut down reason:
 - "Love is love": This shuts down logic and reason by silencing moral claims about homosexual marriage. If we accept "love is love" uncritically, logic would require one to open the door for polyamory, child brides, animal marriages, and more matters that defy the conscience of most.

- "My body, my choice": This shuts down logic and reasoning by silencing moral claims about the body of children in the womb. It ignores the question of when life begins, which science answers differently than their slogan.
- "Trust the science": This shuts down the logic and reasoning of the efficacy of, for instance, COVID vaccines. Those who chanted "trust the science" were ironically ignoring the science, which told a different story. (This is not a political statement but a scientific one. Even "science" gets politicized.)
- The aforementioned "slogans" appear to be political, but that is a ruse, just like the claim of Demetrius that his concern centered on Artemis. In truth, he felt worried about the god he truly worshiped: Mammon. The reason these people defy logic with their slogans is because they don't care about logic. As in all false religions, they persecute dissenters to preserve an entire worldview. They are not the first. Demetrius does the same thing here. Our culture is secular, but only on the surface. Everyone worships. Secularism worships Mammon, bowing to the altar of Self.
- To be fair, the false worship of secularism applies not just to the far Left but also the far Right. Some have labeled it the "Woke Right" because of its hyper-focus on intersections of race and culture. Whereas the Woke Left blames white people for everything, the Woke Right blames Jews and minorities. Their slogans resemble the Nazis of old: "blood and soil," and "no more brother wars." Behind these worldviews is the glorification of Self. When we worship God, we avoid these extremes.
- As Christians, we should never ignore logic and reasoning by punchy slogans. Jesus is the "Word of God"—the divine "Logos" (Greek word for "Word"). He is not only alluding to the creation account in Genesis; he is also drawing on the Greek notion of logic. The concept of Logos in Greek philosophy represented divine reason or the rational principle that governs the universe. By calling Himself the Logos, Jesus affirms that God's truth is not only revealed in spiritual matters but also in a rational, coherent order that can be understood and engaged with intellectually.
- This means that Christianity, at its core, is not anti-reason. Instead, it invites us to engage our minds in the pursuit of truth. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37), implying that our faith should be reasonable, thoughtful, and discerning. The gospel itself is a message that makes sense—both spiritually and logically—because it presents the world's deepest problems (sin, suffering, death) and offers a rational solution (the redemption of creation through Christ's sacrifice).
- In this light, Christians should be cautious of simply parroting slogans that evade critical thinking or avoid hard questions. While slogans can be effective in rallying a group or promoting an idea, they can also oversimplify complex issues, preventing deeper dialogue. As the Church, we are called to engage with both the world's logic and the wisdom of God, presenting a reasoned defense for the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). We must hold fast to the Logos—the Word that is both divine and rational—showing that faith in Christ is not just a matter of the heart but a reasonable response to the reality of who God is and what He has done in Jesus.
- Ultimately, the Christian faith doesn't demand blind allegiance to slogans or shallow answers. Instead, it invites us into a deeper understanding of truth, one that integrates reason and revelation, logic and love, intellect and faith.

—"the city was filled with confusion": Even though the "disturbance" arose because of "the Way", Christianity could not be blamed for the near-riot. These people were irrational. Luke's story provides a defense of Christianity. Christians in this story display sober-mindedness. It was the money-loving pagans who lost their minds.

—"Gaius and Aristarchus":

- "Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you" (Rom. 16:23).
- "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius" (1 Cor. 1:14).
- "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him)" (Col. 4:10).

- “Mark, **Aristarchus**, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers” (Phil. 1:24).

—“the disciples would not let him... even the Asiarchs, who were friends of his” urged him not to go into the theater.

- Two groups prevented Paul from entering the fray: (1) “the disciples” and (2) “the Asiarchs” (who were his “friends”).
- The disciples included the church in Ephesus and his traveling team. The “Asiarchs” were city officials in Ephesus. Paul had befriended them. This latter group would not have included “disciples”—believers. As in Acts 18, unbelieving Gentile politicians came to Paul’s aid. Again, this is part of Luke’s apologetic: “The Way” is not a subversive, rebellious religious sect, bent on overthrowing kings and public order. Even pagan public officials have repeatedly recognized this!
- Even though we should “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5), we should never seek to overthrow governments and disrupt public order. Whatever political ruler is in charge—even if he is evil—Jesus is the king of that ruler (Rev. 1:5).

—“most of them did not know why they had come together”: such is the nature of riots.

33 Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

—The Jews put forward a man named Alexander to address the crowd. In all likelihood, the Jews wanted to distance themselves from the commotion being blamed on “the Way.”

—The crowd would not have it. In their minds, Jews and Christians all fit into the same neat category.

—I have noticed the same thing with outsiders to the intricacies of Christianity. For instance, Paula White has been propped up by politicians as a spokesman for Christianity, but she promotes the Prosperity Gospel rather than the gospel of suffering and death, which is to say, the gospel of Christ crucified. Recently, she appealed for people to donate \$1000 to her ministry in exchange for a seven-fold blessing, including an angel assigned to you, based on a passage about Passover. She murdered the text to promote her pocketbook. Remember what I said about worshipping the Mammon God? Let the reader understand.

35 And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” 41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

—“town clerk”: This was an important public official in Greek and Roman cities. He managed civic affairs, including public communications, public records, and public order. The town clerk in this case was a respected individual who had authority over the crowd.

—“who is there that does not know”:

- The town clerk appeals to what we now know to be myths—on the level of fairy tales—but he refers to them as common knowledge. Throughout history, this happens. We believe in “the gods” until we discover they are nothing. We believe in a flat world until we discover it is round. We believe in a geocentric Solar System until we discover that the sun is at the center.
- How can we know that what we know—and base our lives on—is not just a myth or fairy tale? There’s a reason why all the false gods have been disproven. They lack evidence, they contradict observable reality, and they fail to stand up to scrutiny over time. True knowledge endures because it is grounded in evidence, reason, and the consistency of truth that can be tested and verified across generations. The enduring nature of truth, especially when it aligns with the laws of nature and human experience, distinguishes it from myths that only fade as our understanding deepens. The divine Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ, is a God of logic and reason.
- How do the false gods “lack evidence... contradict observable reality, and... fail to stand up to scrutiny over time”?

- Lack of evidence: There is actually zero evidence for any of the false gods of former religions. Most of them did not even promote morals and were immoral themselves. In contrast, Christians can point to the empty tomb, the many witnesses, the explosion of Christianity on that basis, as well as the classical arguments for God: the moral argument, the teleological (fine-tuning) argument, the cosmological argument (the universe requires an uncaused cause), and on top of these, the witness of transformed lives.
- Contradict observable reality: One example of this is with certain Hindu-influenced regions of India, particularly around temples dedicated to the goddess Karni Mata in Deshnok. This temple is often referred to as the Temple of Rats. The rats at this temple are believed to be the reincarnations of family members of those who worship there. As a result, many people feed and care for the rats, and killing or harming them is strictly forbidden. Even though they now have cleaning protocols in place, there have been times historically where a refusal to deal with rats has led to disease and widespread human deaths. In contrast, where Christianity is RIGHTLY practiced, the result is not harm but love, life, and transformation. Even atheism does not result in these things. Atheists can be moral people, but nobody “finds atheism” and kicks their addiction to alcohol as a result.
- Stands up to scrutiny over time: If the polytheistic religions were true, they would have prevailed. Truth is like a buoy. No matter how hard you press it under the water, it forces its way to the surface. The gospel has been quashed at various times in history, but it never stays under. Atheists who predicted the death of God have themselves died—but God, and those who believe in Him, have persisted. This alone does not prove Christianity because some false religions persist too. But if Christianity is true, we would expect it to also last. The false gods of the pagans have mostly perished with time, as all created things do.

—“temple keeper”: The city of Ephesus was the “keeper” of this sacred site because it was entrusted with maintaining and overseeing the temple’s rituals, festivities, and the religious and economic activities surrounding it. Ephesus was world-renowned for this reason.

—“sacred stone that fell from the sky”:

- The sacred stone mentioned in Acts 19 is believed to have been a meteorite or stone that ancient Ephesian worshippers regarded as a divine object sent from the heavens by Artemis herself. This stone would have been housed in the temple, and it was thought to represent Artemis or to be a physical manifestation of her presence and power. Many ancient cultures, including the Ephesians, revered objects believed to be from the sky as divine, seeing them as gifts or signs from the gods.
- Schreiner: “A subtle allusion to Luke 10:18 may exist here—‘I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning’—thus painting Artemis under the banner of defeated cosmic forces.”

—“these things cannot be denied”:

- Again, the town clerk makes a truth claim that we can easily deny. We now know the difference between “meteors” as astronomical events, not sacred stones sent by false gods.
- The world continues asserting truth claims without justification. Even the claim that, “It’s arrogant to claim you have the right religion and everyone is wrong” is a truth claim that must be tested. The person asserting it, ironically, insists that his truth claim about spirituality is correct, and others’ views are false. Everyone believes something—even those who claim to believe nothing.
- I’m reminded of Tim Keller’s critique of this view in his book *Reason for God*. He talks about the famous image of an elephant, representing all the world’s religions. Keller describes a parable in which several blind men are each asked to describe an elephant. One man feels the elephant’s trunk and describes it as a snake; another feels its leg and calls it a tree; another touches its side and says it’s like a wall, and so on. The point of the parable is that, according to relativism, each person has only a partial understanding of the truth. The claim is that all religions are like the blind men, each grasping a part of the divine but none seeing the full picture. Relativism argues that no one has a complete view of God; all perspectives are equally valid.
- However, Keller points out the fundamental flaw in this view: the person who claims to see the whole elephant is ironically doing the same thing that they accuse others of—claiming to have the

full truth. If all religions are like blind men touching an elephant, then the relativist themselves is the one who is claiming to see the whole elephant, while others only see parts. In other words, the person who insists on the equal validity of all religions is making a truth claim of their own, one that must be scrutinized and tested just like any other belief system.

—"For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess... there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion":

- Once again, Luke is showing how the Christians are not at fault for the uproar in the city. They have been godly and respectful.
- There's a way to exist within pagan cultures without being mean-spirited or improper.