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THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: DISTORTED AND DEFORMED

CHAPTER II

ACTS 19:23-41

In Jesus' day, when the government or organization wanted to announce a gathering, they would send a herald, a chronicler, an announcer, who would call out the purpose of the meeting, who should attend, place, time etc.

Those who attended that particular "*calling out*" were called the "*ecclesia*" to that calling.

In Acts Chapter 19 starting at verse 23, we have a very interesting "*ecclesia*" or "church" gathering:

"And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver Shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are

made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.

Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theatre. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.

And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!'

And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: 'Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.'

And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly." Acts 19:23-41

Here we have an illegal "assembly" made by an illegal "calling out." The Romans were very fearful of assemblies of any kind and had very stringent laws of assembling in any kind of manner whatsoever.

There is a lot in this passage of Scripture than can be commented on. The main thing to point out is that this gathering; this assembly; this community; this "church" if you will, had a purpose for gathering.

As has been said, the KJV translators, as well as all subsequent ones, substituted the word "church" for the Greek word ecclesia in every place it appears in the NT Scripture

with the exception of three instances; all three found in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41. Why did the translators translate the word *ecclesia* correctly only in these three verses in Acts 19? You could see why very easily when you examine the context.

Remember that according to the translators and to their customs and traditions that they have developed, a church is a religious organization or institution; or, the word is used to refer to a building built by men, where people go to do their religious services.

How can they possibly use their incorrect translation ("church") in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41? It wouldn't make sense. It would expose their deception and corruption. So they used the correct translation: assembly, or gathering, or community. The design and the hypocrisy of the leadership among the translators is seen very clearly.

They incorrectly translated *ecclesia* as "church" over 100 times, except in these three instances in Acts 19. Isn't that incredible? Why? If the Greek word "*ecclesia*" really means the same thing as the English word "church," why did not the translators render it "church" in these three cases?

The word "*ecclesia*" could NOT have been translated by the word church because it does NOT have the same meaning!

In the day of Christ and His apostles, the word "*ecclesia*" was an everyday word that simply meant "assembly;" "congregation;" "community" or "gathering" of people. Any gathering of people, whether religious, political, or even criminal in purpose, was called an "*ecclesia*."

The word itself gives no indication of the kind or the purpose of the assembly (*ecclesia*). In Acts 19:32, 41, *ecclesia* is translated "assembly" and refers to an unlawful gathering, a mob. In the same context it has reference to a "lawful assembly" in Acts 19:39.

In all instances where the word "*ecclesia*" appeared, if it was in a religious connection or had to do with the Lord's people, the word "church" was substituted. Hence, in Acts 19 the three times the word appears it has no reference to the Lord's disciples and the word "assembly" is given as a true translation.

This flagrant deception of substituting the word "church" rather than providing a proper translation has been a source of untold problems giving apparent justification for the institutional church as we know it today, from the Roman Catholic Church onward!

The fact of the matter is that people could have "*church*" and not worship the true Creator. People could follow a "*calling out*" which was not only unlawful, but basically served no real purpose. For two full hours, the Ephesians screamed 6 words! This was, according to the true Greek meaning of the word, an *ecclesia*. But,...BUT, according to the translators, this should have been a "*church service*" too! But no, that can't be!

A point to be considered is this: Just because people gather together on Sunday at a place called "church" does not mean they are doing what God calls them to do at such a gathering. There is nothing sacred about "*going to church.*"

But in our Western society, "*going to church*" has become something sacred, as sacred as Diana was to the Ephesians.

In our society, patriotic, law-abiding, moral people go to church. The President of the United States, when he wants to portray his morality, will use television footages and pictures of himself attending church even though he has no interest in the things of God. There is a strong cultural pull to attend church, not because the Holy Spirit is calling, but because our cultural and/or religious conditioning is calling.

Many of us are familiar with the term "*go to church.*" It is ingrained in us. But there is not a single Scriptural reference to support the idea of "going to church." When a Christian hears the true "calling out" it is the Holy Spirit calling us to Himself, not to some church building where we do all sorts of things which may or may not have anything to do with what God may want us to do.

Thanks to the influence of the Pagans and the Romans (and eventually the Roman Catholic Church), and right down to our so-called "*church fathers,*" we now have church buildings and they have become so adopted as a part of our religious culture that we actually have deceived ourselves to think they are necessary and biblical.

We falsely presume that true spiritual growth and fellowship cannot transpire without one of these "churches." We might ask ourselves, "if the early ecclesia thrived and spread like wild fire throughout the world without church buildings and programs, how is it we have come to believe that we can do nothing without them?"

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Next - [CHAPTER III: "C-H-U-R-C-H"... "C-H-U-R-C-H"... AND MORE "C-H-U-R-C-H"](#)

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