WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 19 verses 29-41 (ESV 1028-1029)

Verse 29-31- Demetrius in his attempt to stir up his fellow merchants, not only stirred them up, but the entire city. The Greek word translated in most versions as "confusion," is "synchysis" (soong'-khoo-sis) which means a commixture of riotous disturbance. This was an angry mob. In the absence of Paul, they randomly seized two men who were known to have traveled with him and dragged them by force into the assembly hall. These people turned their grievances and disagreements into something violent and potentially destructive or harmful. This potential danger led the disciples and even some of the leaders (civic as well as religious) to warn Paul to stay away from the meeting place, though he wanted to go in to answer them. (Proverbs 29:8 and 22, ESV 613), (2 Timothy 2:16-17, ESV 1098) (James 1:19-20, ESV 1113)

Verse 32-34- There was so much disorder in the crowd that many of them did not even know what they were angry about. In fact, there were several agendas. Some were angry because they thought their idol goddess was being disrespected. Some were angry that their financial well-being might be threatened. The Jews in the crowd just wanted to go against Paul and his teaching about Jesus as the Messiah. Based on what they did, it is possible that they did not even know how the dispute started. They drew Alexander, a prominent Jewish figure out to state their cause, but the angry Ephesians felt that Paul was part of the Jewish community, so they did not want to hear it. They shouted for two full hours touting the greatness of their statue.

Verse 35-36- No doubt that the noise became so great that a city official had to come out to quiet them. He did this by appealing to their sense of civic pride. To paraphrase what he told them, he said, " Who doesn't know about the greatness of Ephesus because it is the dwelling of the great goddess Artemis, built from the sacred stone that fell from the sky?"[i] He further advised that if no one was denying that this stone came from the sky or that Ephesus was the chosen temple keeper of this sacred stone, then they had no reason to be so loud or to act so reckless.

Verse 37-41- Then, the official addressed the crowd regarding the law. After all, that was really what his job entailed, to keep the peace according to the law. He started with the biggest offense of the moment, the treatment of Paul's two traveling companions who had committed no offense to anyone. Then, he addressed the instigators, Demetrius and the other craftsmen. He warned them that any legitimate lawful claim must be taken to the proper authorities and not to a random crowd. Then, he gave a warning that for inciting the riot, charges could be brought upon them. Then he sent them all on their way.

It's important to note that Paul had no part in this instance, although the initial conflict was about him. On good advice, he stayed away. We must look to the Lord to know when to act and when to refrain from acting. (Exodus 14:13-14, ESV 62), (Psalm 46:9-11, ESV 522), (Proverbs 11:14, ESV 595) (Psalm 5:8, 496) This time the Lord used a non-religious city official to protect Paul and the Christians. He did this to show His power is over believers and non-believers alike. (Proverbs 21:1, ESV 605), (Proverbs 16:4, ESV 600)

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[i] Some translations say," image that fell from heaven," some say, "stone that fell from Jupiter or Zeus." Unfortunately, there is no certainty about the exact meaning of the Greek word that was used here. It is believed that possibly the stone was a meteorite that fell from the sky.