

Jonathan Cahn: How to Fight Against Ancient Gods and Worldly Powers

In a powerful teaching drawn from Acts 19, Rabbi Jonathan Cahn unpacks the intense spiritual conflict the Apostle Paul faced in Ephesus, where the gospel clashed with the worship of Diana—also known as Artemis—the goddess revered by the city’s inhabitants.

“The Jewish people were brought into the world to glorify God, to make Him known,” Cahn explains. “In order to do that, you have to come against and expose the gods of the world.”

Acts 19 reveals that Paul’s preaching against idols stirred fierce opposition from local craftsmen. Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana, gathered his fellow workers saying, “Sir, you know that by this business we have our wealth, our income, our prosperity.”

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Cahn notes the power of this idol industry: “Not only is there danger that this art trade will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana will be made of nothing—that she should even be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worship.”

He explains that Diana—called Artemis in Greece—was “one of the most worshiped gods in ancient times... goddess of the forest and the hills, the huntress depicted with bow and

arrow." Her temple in Ephesus, "the lady of Ephesus," was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

As Cahn recounted, the riot erupted, the mob cried out repeatedly, "Great is Diana, Artemis of the Ephesians!" The shouting continued for two hours, "and they are proclaiming this throughout the city."

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The crowd's frenzy is contrasted with Paul's courage. Even as a violent mob dragged his companions into the theater, Paul was ready to enter, believing, "I can spread the gospel here... we've got a stadium even though they want to kill us."

Cahn stresses that this spiritual conflict is ongoing, "This is a war—God on one side, the gods on the other." The battle against idols like Diana is also a spiritual battle against the powers behind them.

Referencing Isaiah 62, he reminds believers of what is still to come: "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning."

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Despite opposition, believers are called to advance: "We're not here to survive... I'm here to bring the gospel... it's not the job of the darkness to come to the light—it's the job of the light to go to the darkness."

Believers are still called to stand firm, expose the idols of this age and boldly carry God's light into a world still captivated by ancient and modern deceptions. The call is

clear: be unshaken, advance with faith and let the glory of God triumph over every false god.

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