



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

New Testament Survey

Lesson 24 – Paul’s Third Mission Journey – Chiefly in Ephesus

Paul in Ephesus

On his second missionary journey Paul had wanted to work in Ephesus, which was the center of the province of Asia, but God had directed him to Macedonia instead. At the end of his second journey Paul stopped briefly in Ephesus on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem. He promised the Jews there that he would return. He left his fellow-tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus.

After spending some time in Antioch of Syria and the Galatian cities, Paul returned to Ephesus. He learned that during his absence an eloquent preacher from Alexandria in Egypt named Apollos had come to Ephesus and taught the Jews in the synagogue. Apollos was a Christian, but he knew only a part of the Good News. Priscilla and Aquila invited him into their home and taught him more fully. Apollos was then sent to Corinth where he watered the congregation Paul had planted by teaching forcefully that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. Apollos knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well. Martin Luther thought that Apollos might have written the New Testament letter to the Hebrews.

When Paul came to Ephesus, he began his work by instructing twelve Christians who had not yet heard of the Holy Spirit. These men then experienced a Pentecost-like experience by speaking in tongues.

Paul was able to stay in Ephesus for about three years. Ephesus became the center of mission activity throughout the province of Asia. It is very likely that during these three years Christian congregations were formed in nearby cities such as Miletus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Colosse. One of Paul’s associates named Epaphras preached the Gospel in Colosse and founded a congregation there. During the time that Paul was in Ephesus, he also supervised other congregations, such as the congregations in Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica.

Paul had three major conflicts during his three years in Ephesus. The first conflict was with the unbelieving Jews. After three months they succeeded in removing Paul from the synagogue. After that Paul taught daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Paul’s second conflict was with sorcery or black magic. God showed the people of Ephesus that there was a great difference between their sorcery and the genuine miracles God performed through Paul. Many were convinced, and they publicly burned of their expensive magic books.

Paul's third conflict was with the state religion of Ephesus: the worship of Artemis (Diana) of the Ephesians. The spread of the Gospel in Asia was hurting the business of the silversmiths, who made shrines for the worship of Artemis. Demetrius, the leader of the silversmiths, stirred up the silversmiths and other Ephesians. This led to a riot in the theater. After several hours of mindless shouting, a city official quieted the people. He told them to bring charges against Paul in an orderly way if they had something against him. Paul and his associates escaped without harm.

Impending Trouble

As Paul was about to return to Jerusalem after visiting the congregations in Macedonia and Achaia, he was threatened by grave danger. Already in Corinth some of the unbelieving Jews had plotted to kill him. Prophets in every congregation he visited told Paul to expect severe suffering in the near future. Paul met the pastors of Ephesus at Miletus and told them that they would see him no more. And at both at Tyre and at Caesarea Paul was again warned of trouble to come, namely, he would be handed over to the Gentiles by the unbelieving Jews, just like Jesus Himself had been handed over.

Read the listed passages as you study each of the events below. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask them.

Revisiting the churches in Galatia (Acts 18:23)

At Antioch in Syria, the congregations in Galatia – Paul strengthened the disciples there.

Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila prepare the way for Paul in Ephesus (Acts 18:24 – 19:7).

At Ephesus:

Apollos taught in the Jewish synagogue in Ephesus.

Since Apollos' knowledge of Jesus was incomplete, Aquila and Priscilla instructed him.

After Apollos left for Corinth, Paul arrived in Ephesus.

Paul instructed twelve men who had not heard of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps they had been taught by Apollos before he had been instructed by Aquila and Priscilla.

"The Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues" (v. 19:6).

The first conflict in Ephesus: the unbelieving Jews (Acts 19:8-10)

At Ephesus:

Paul was able to use the Jewish synagogue for three months.

When the majority rejected him, Paul taught God's Word in the school of Tyrannus.

Although Paul supported himself in Ephesus, he spared enough time to teach daily.

Many Jews and Greeks from Asia (the province) heard the Gospel of Jesus through him or through his associates or converts.

“All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (v. 10).

The second conflict in Ephesus: sorcery and magic (Acts 19:11-20)

At Ephesus:

“God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul” (v. 11).

Seven Jewish exorcists tried to imitate Paul by using the name of Jesus.

A man with an evil spirit jumped on them and wounded them.

The evil spirit: **“Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?”** (v. 15).

Many Ephesians gave up their sorcery, burned their magic books, and turned to Jesus.

“The value ... totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver” (v. 19).

The third conflict in Ephesus: the state religion, the worship of Diana or Artemis (Acts 19:21-41)

At Ephesus:

Paul’s plan was to go to Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and then Rome.

Paul sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia.

Demetrius stirred up the silversmiths against Paul because they were losing business.

The whole city was aroused and shouted: **“Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”** (vv. 28, 34).

Paul’s associates, Gaius and Aristarchus, were led to the theater.

Some Asiarchs (officials) prevented Paul from facing the mob in the theater.

A Jew named Alexander was unable to quiet the rioting crowd.

The town clerk quieted the mob, scolded Demetrius, and told the people to go home.

(Note: The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the world.)

Paul in Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:1-5)

Macedonia (including Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea):

“He encouraged them with many words” (v. 2).

Achaia:

Paul spent three months there, chiefly in Corinth, planning a trip to Jerusalem next.

A Jewish plot against Paul led him to return to Macedonia first.

Macedonia:

We learn from Paul’s letters that he was gathering an offering for the poor in Jerusalem.

Seven associates joined Paul for this journey to Jerusalem with the offering:

Sopater of Berea;

Aristarchus of Thessalonica;

Secundus of Thessalonica;
Gaius of Derbe;
Timothy of Lystra;
Tychicus of Ephesus;
Trophimus of Ephesus.

Philippi:

Luke rejoined the group. (The words **“we”** and **“us”** are used after this point.)

Paul on the continent of Asia again (Acts 20:6-38)

Troas:

Paul **“talked a long while”** at a Sunday evening meeting (v. 11).

A young man named Eutychus fell asleep and fell from the third story and died.

Paul went down, embraced him, and then said: **“His life is in him”** (v. 10).

Paul went on with his talk **“till daybreak”** (v. 11).

Assos:

Paul went by foot, while the others took a boat.

Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogyllium:

Miletus:

Since Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, he bypassed Ephesus.

The leaders of the Ephesian church came to visit Paul at Miletus.

Paul preached a farewell **Sermon No. 7** to these leaders (20:18-35).

“I ... taught you ... repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus” (vv. 20-21).

“Chains and tribulations await me. ... You ... will see my face no more” (v. 23, 25).

“I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (v. 27).

“The Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God” (v. 28).

“After my departure savage wolves will come in among you” (v. 29).

“Remember ... that He said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (v. 35).

They wept, and kissed him, and accompanied him to the ship.

The trip to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-17)

Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Cyprus:

Tyre:

While Paul was there seven days, he was warned not to go to Jerusalem.

The whole congregation came out to the shore to send Paul on his way.

Ptolemais:

Caesarea:

The evangelist Philip and his four unmarried daughters lived there.

The prophet Agabus foretold Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem.

Luke and many others pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

Paul: **"I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem"** (v. 13).

The others then said: **"The will of the Lord be done"** (v. 14).

Jerusalem:

Paul and his associates stayed with Mnason, who had been a believer for a long time.

Questions

1. How did Paul support himself during his time at Ephesus?
2. Who was Apollos, and how is he described in the Bible?
3. Why did Paul stop speaking at the synagogue in Ephesus?
4. What led the Christians at Ephesus to burn their magic books?
5. Who caused the riot in Ephesus?
6. How did God protect Paul from the rioters?
7. Why was Paul traveling with so many associates on his way to Jerusalem?
8. What does it mean when the book of Acts switches from "they" to "we"?
9. What did Paul say about his preaching to the elders from Ephesus?
10. What was Paul's prophecy concerning the future of the congregation in Ephesus?
11. What did the many prophets tell Paul as he was on his way to Jerusalem?
12. Why did Paul feel it was his duty to go to Jerusalem?