

BIB204 NT2 Early Church

Unit 4d

The 3rd Missionary Journey: Ephesus, Achaia, Journey to Jerusalem

Presented by the



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Picking up where we left off, we are in Acts 18:24, which opens up with the identification of a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt by the name of Apollos. He came to Ephesus. This was prior to Paul going back to Ephesus during his third missionary journey and staying there for a significant longer period of time than he was able to the first time. Apollos is competent in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord, but he only knew the baptism of John. That material is in verses 24 to 25. He spoke in the synagogue. Priscilla and Aquila heard him, and they took him aside and explained to him that Jesus had already come and had died on the cross and was raised from the dead. At some point, Apollos (verse 27) was going to cross over to Achaia, and the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. So he would have gone to Corinth. He would have gone to Cenchreae. And in fact, what you see in the first letter to the Corinthians is mention of Apollos. "I am of Apollos." "I am of Cephas." That sort of thing, because Apollos went there. And he also went to Cenchreae. So we have an artifact from the first letter of Corinthians about Apollos' visit to Corinth. We have no artifact regarding his visit to Cenchreae. So he powerfully refuted the Jews in public (18:28), showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Acts 19. Apollos is at Corinth. Paul passes through the inland country. He goes to Ephesus. He finds 12 disciples and he asks them if they've received the Holy Spirit, and they weren't aware of the Holy Spirit. So he asks them what they were baptized unto. They say the baptism of John. So Paul evangelizes them. They believe. He baptizes them. They come up out of the water. The Holy Spirit falls on them and indwells them, and they speak in tongues. And these men are 12 in number. That is verses 1 to 7. Verse 8, he goes into the synagogue at Ephesus. He speaks for three months, boldly reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom. But some Jews became stubborn and continued in unbelief, so he withdrew from that synagogue and took the disciples with him, reasoning in the hall of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years so that Asia Minor was filled with the word of the gospel. Jews and Greeks heard of the gospel.

That strange interlude running from about verses 11 to 20. God was doing miracles through Paul's hands. Handkerchiefs and aprons that touched his skin were then ferried over to people who were ill or people who were demon possessed, and the demons were exorcised. The people who had diseases experienced healing. Then you had some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists (verse 13) seeking to use the name of the Lord Jesus as a power name, a name of power, to cast out a demon from a man. So they said to this man, this demon-possessed man, "We adjure you by the Jesus that Paul preaches." And the demon-possessed man says, "Well, I know Jesus and I know Paul, but who are you?" So he beats up these seven exorcists, sons of Sceva, and strips them naked. So they run from the house wounded. And this story spreads (verse 17) to all the residents of Ephesus. So fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was exalted.

And now look at this strange verse. "Many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily." So there were people who had come to faith in Christ as a result of the preaching throughout all of Asia Minor, but some of them were still involved with those practices. And when this incident happened to the seven sons of Sceva, it was a wake-up call. And they came and they confessed what they had practiced and were probably, some of them, still practicing. And they brought their amulets and their talismans and their books, and they burned them. Worth 50,000 pieces of silver, everything that was destroyed in the fire. So the gospel has made room for itself. There is an increase.

After these events, Paul decided he wanted to pass through the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. In other words, he wanted to visit Thessalonica, Berea, Philippi. He wanted to visit Corinth and Cenchreae. After that, he would go to Jerusalem. And then after that, he would want to go to Rome. So he sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, but he kept staying in Ephesus. He made a determination in Ephesus that he was going to go. But there was a silversmith starting in verse 23 of Acts 19. There was a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis and he gathered together his guild and said that business was poor because of this preaching, this new message. In any event, they stir up a social dynamic. The mob, the crowd goes into the amphitheater. And in the course of time, they have a shout out. They have a rally, as it were, a three-hour long rally. "Great is Artemis (or Diana) of the Ephesians!" Paul would have gone into the amphitheater, but the disciples realized the danger to Paul and they don't let him do it. The town clerk has to quiet the crowd and has to remind them that this kind of an assembly is unlawful. It could bring the Roman military might down on their heads as punishment, as retribution. So the town clerk dismisses the assembly.

So what I just did there was I summarized Acts 19:23 all the way to verse 41, just pointing out the highlights of the passage. Again, this is Paul's third missionary journey. And of course, his third missionary journey runs anywhere from AD 54 to about 57. Now, of course, during this time period, AD 54, maybe 53, to 57, and I say 57 because Romans is written in AD 57. I say that proleptically. But during the years AD 55 and 56, he writes what we now call 1 and 2 Corinthians. But of course, when you correlate the information in Acts and 1 and 2 Corinthians, it appears that Paul wrote a total of four letters to Corinth, and two of those never made it into the canon. He wrote a first letter to them which was referenced in 1 Corinthians 5:9. That letter is lost to us. He wrote a second letter, and that's 1 Corinthians. He wrote a third letter after a painful visit because of the negative response of a church to what we now call 1 Corinthians. So in 2 Corinthians 2, he highlights the fact that there was a painful visit that he made to Corinth to address the issues that were taking place that he had addressed earlier on in the first letter to the Corinthians. That visit did not work out too well and he wrote a letter to them in response. That is also lost to us. Then he wrote the fourth letter Corinthians D, which is actually our second letter to the Corinthians in the canon. So, so far, we've got James. We've got Galatians. We've got 1 and 2 Thessalonians. We've got 1 and 2 Corinthians. In that order, chronologically. And then, of course, in AD 57, as he makes his way to Jerusalem, he leaves, he writes or dictates Romans from Corinth, which is in the Achaian province. And of course, after that, he departs for Jerusalem. So that's what's written so far in the context of the history of the church as depicted by Luke's narrative in Acts.

So chapter 20, Paul sends for the disciples. He encourages them. He goes to Macedonia. He passes through the regions of Macedonia and Achaia, as he had stated earlier as his intent. If you go back to 19:21, you see that he resolves to pass through Macedonia and Achaia, which is why you see in 20:2, he had gone through these regions, gave these churches much encouragement. He went to Greece. He spent three months there. There was a plot made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, and he decided to return through Macedonia. This is the time period where 2 Corinthians is written. 1 Corinthians is written probably from Macedonia, as is 2 Corinthians. There's a strong argument for Macedonia being the place of writing, the place of composition for 1 and 2 Corinthians. Then you can fit that within the material of Acts 19 and the early part of Acts 20.

We're told about the people who accompany him: Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. They went to Troas. They went on ahead of Paul and they were waiting for him at Troas. They sailed

away from Philippi in Macedonia after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and they went to Troas and they stayed there for seven days. We have a section here, verses 7 to 16. Paul gives a teaching at Troas on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. Paul teaches all day long until midnight. There's a young man by the name of Eutychus. He sits in the window. He falls into a deep sleep because Paul has been teaching all day. He falls out of the window from the third story, and he died. Paul went and, by the power of the Lord, resurrected him. Verse 13, they sail for Assos. He gets to Assos. He's on board, taken on board a ship, and he goes to Mitylene, and then he goes to Chios. These are islands between the Galatio-Phrygian coast, and they're a bunch of islands that are basically like stepping stones all the way to Cyprus. "The next day we touch at Samos. The next day after that, we went to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." So now Paul's energies are directed towards getting to Jerusalem.

Verse 17 of Acts 20, he is at Miletus. He sends to Ephesus and calls the elders of the church to come to him. Then when they come to him, he tells them, he reminds them of his ministry among them and of the warnings that he had given them, warning them day and night with tears about those who would arise from among them, among the congregation as savage wolves not sparing the flock. And that particular language you'd find in verse 29. But I'll read verse 28 first. "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." After he says these things, verse 36, he kneels down and he prays with them. And there's much weeping on the part of everyone. They embrace Paul. They kiss him because they know they're never going to see him again. They accompany him to the ship.

They set sail (chapter 21). They run to Cos and then to Rhodes and then to Patara. They're coming to Phoenicia. So they're approaching the Levant now. They come inside of Cyprus, they leave it on the left, and they sail to Syria. They land at Tyre and they stay with believers in Tyre. Now, in chapter 21, there's a steady drumbeat of people, believers who are telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem because trouble awaits him there. Of course, they finish the voyage from Tyre. They go to Ptolemais. That's verse 7 of chapter 21. They greet the brothers. They stay with them for one day. They leave. They go to Caesarea (verse 8). They enter the house of Philip the evangelist. So that's the Philip of Acts 6, the one who evangelized Samaria. He has four unmarried daughters who prophesied. Agabus comes down from Judea, takes Paul's belt, binds his hands and feet (verse 11), and says, "This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." This is what the Holy Spirit says. So people begin to urge Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but Paul pushes back and says, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? (verse 13) I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." So they could not dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem, so they stopped trying.

So they went to Jerusalem (verse 15). Some of the disciples from Caesarea went with the party. Verse 17, arrival in Jerusalem. The brothers received them gladly. Paul went in the very next day with the others to James and all the elders. They greeted them and Paul talked about his missionary work, what God had done among the Gentiles. Verse 20, they glorify God for all of this. Then they say to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among

the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads.”

So these men are basically under a Nazarite vow. Basically a symptom, basically an illustration of the fact that Jews in Jerusalem and in the surrounding part of greater Jerusalem, part of Judea, they are very zealous to keep the law. They have trusted in Messiah, but they are zealous to keep the law. So you have these men who are under a Nazarite vow and they basically ask Paul to take these men to the temple so as to prove his *bona fides*, that he lives in observance of the law, because they've heard about Paul's evangelistic activity where the Gentiles are concerned, and they are concerned, incensed even, that he seems to be teaching other Jews to forsake the Law of Moses and to not circumcise their children and not to walk according to their customs. None of which was true. All Paul was doing was teasing out, indeed stating explicitly, the ramifications of the gospel. But he never directly advocated for Jews to forsake the Law of Moses. It was more a case of him saying that the law no longer applied. So the accusations against Paul were overstated.

Verse 25, they agree. They said, “But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.’ Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.” So Paul agrees. He takes these men to the temple. He participates with them in the fulfilment of their Nazarite vow. He supports them at the request of the elders of Jerusalem, not to mention James.

Now, before we close this segment, I misspoke and I want to go ahead and correct that right here. I did say, I talked about the departure from Macedonia back in chapter 20. I just want to make a slight course correction. He went through the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. He came to Greece. They left from Troas. There were brothers waiting for him at Troas. This is now verse 1 of chapter 20 all the way to verse 6. There's a plot against Paul's life. He goes through Macedonia and there are other believers from Berea, Thessalonica. And of course, you've got Timothy. You've got Gaius of Derbe, Tychicus and Trophimus. They go on ahead to Troas, but they, Paul and his party, sail away from Philippi and then they arrive and meet those brethren at Troas five days later. On the first day of the week, Paul preaches all day long. Eutychus falls from the third story window. He dies. Paul raises him from the dead in the power of the Lord Jesus. Verse 13 of chapter 20, they set sail for Assos. They go from Assos to Mitylene. Then they go to Chios, and then to Samos, and then to Miletus because Paul decided to sail past Ephesus.

All of that is in Macedonia and Achaia. All those geographical points are in the vicinity of the province of Macedonia and Achaia and are to be distinguished from the next part of the journey which we see after Paul embraces the Ephesian elders and gives them final warnings and bids them farewell. In Acts 21, they leave from Miletus. They sail to Cos, to Rhodes, to Patara. That is what is close to Cyprus. I said earlier in this segment that the earlier geographical stepping stones were close to Cyprus. That's not accurate. The geographical locations that you see in chapter 21 are what are close to the island of Cyprus. So that's a minor course correction, and hopefully that clears things up. In the next unit, the very next unit which will involve a sequence of segments of video, we will pick up in Acts 21:27 with respect

to the Nazarite vow and Paul's agreement to support these four men who are under this vow and are about to end their period of being Nazarites.