

The Book of Acts

The Third Missionary Journey

Lesson #10 for September 8, 2018

Scriptures: Acts 18:24-28; 19; 20:7-12,15-27; 21:1-15; 2 Corinthians 4:8-14.

1. This lesson will talk about Paul's incredible third missionary journey. Who was with him during that journey of thousands of miles? Why do you think Ephesus appeared to be a good place for Paul to work and from which to spread the gospel? Do you think he also traveled around Asia Minor, starting churches and building up the gospel in the entire area? These are questions which scholars have struggled with for years.
2. The third missionary journey began as very briefly outlined in Acts 18:23. Fifteen hundred miles traveling through what we would now call Turkey are covered in one sentence. Clearly, the focal point of his third journey was Ephesus. Paul spent more time in Ephesus—approximately three years—than in any other of the cities of Asia Minor or Europe. We do not know exactly how Paul reached out to other areas of Asia Minor. Did Paul travel to those areas himself? Or, did people from those areas who naturally traveled to Ephesus learn from Paul in Ephesus and then carry the message back to their home towns? Did some of Paul's coworkers spread the gospel to other areas? It is quite likely that Paul or his friend Epaphras started the churches in Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea during that time. (Colossians 4:12-13; 1:7; Philemon 23) Did Silas travel with Paul on this journey? Luke was certainly with him, and Timothy probably was. We know that while still at Ephesus, he sent Titus to Corinth to help solve problems there. (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6,13-14)
3. Following his usual pattern, Paul began work in Ephesus by going to the Jewish synagogue. However, before long those who opposed his messages forced him out. As we read in Acts 19:9-10, he moved to the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Over the next two years, he taught and preached there on a daily basis. We can presume that this lecture hall became a kind of church headquarters.
4. Historically, we know that Ephesus became a publication center for the early church. Copies of various manuscripts including letters and later the Gospels were copied there, and from Ephesus they were distributed to the various churches. This third missionary journey was Paul's last one in complete freedom.
5. As we know from our previous lessons, Paul had traveled from Corinth and had stopped in Ephesus on his way home at the end of his second missionary journey. At the time, he was traveling with Priscilla and Aquila. When the Ephesians begged him to stay, he agreed to leave Priscilla and Aquila to help them to start a church group while he went on to Antioch, promising that he would return.
6. While Paul was elsewhere, things were happening. Read Acts 18:24-28. In these verses we learn about Apollos, originally from Alexandria in Egypt. Apollos had apparently traveled to Judea and became a disciple of John the Baptist.

On his arrival at Ephesus, Paul found twelve brethren, who, like Apollos, had been disciples of John the Baptist, and like him had gained some knowledge of the mission of Christ. They had not the ability of Apollos, but with the same sincerity and faith they were seeking to spread abroad the knowledge they had received.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the*

*Apostles** 282.1. [Bold type is added.]

7. When Apollos arrived in Ephesus, he was preaching about “The Way” of the Lord as he had learned it from John the Baptist. Then, he met Priscilla and Aquila, and they informed him further about the ministry and death of Jesus Christ. Later, Apollos decided to go to Achaia and specifically to Corinth. So, the believers in Ephesus gave him a letter of recommendation.
8. What do you think was the difference between John’s baptism and the baptism of Jesus? Or, was it the baptism of the Holy Spirit as at Pentecost? It is very likely that these expressions involve more than just the baptisms themselves, but instead, implied teaching the full stories that these men taught and lived while on earth. It is important to note that the Gospels suggest that the preaching of John had reached the Jews of Judea and Galilee; but, in this story it is clear that those messages had spread to a much larger area.
9. After Apollos had ministered in Ephesus for some time, he left with his letter of recommendation to go to Corinth. Then, Paul arrived.

Acts 19:1-7: While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the province and arrived in Ephesus. There he found some disciples ²and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?”

“We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit,” they answered.

³ “Well, then, what kind of baptism did you receive?” Paul asked.

“The baptism of John,” they answered.

⁴ Paul said, “The baptism of John was for those who turned from their sins; and he told the people of Israel to believe in the one who was coming after him—that is, in Jesus.”

⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶**Paul placed his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them; they spoke in strange tongues and also proclaimed God’s message.**

⁷**They were about twelve men in all.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Acts 19:1-7). New York: American Bible Society. [Bold type is added.]

10. When Paul first arrived in Ephesus, he met those 12 men who had been disciples of John the Baptist. After informing them further about the life and ministry and death of Jesus, why was it necessary for them to be rebaptized?
11. Do you think that everyone who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as these men did, from Paul, were able to speak fluently in any language where they traveled in the future? Did everyone who received baptism in the early days of the Christian church also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit did for them [the first disciples] that which [40] they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was a strong evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. **From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language.**—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 39.2. [Bold type and

content in brackets are added.]

How many people received that gift?

12. It is clear that after a period of time, Paul's work had a significant impact on the city of Ephesus. Even his enemies admitted as much. (See Acts 19:26.)
13. Read Acts 19:11-20. Do we know anything about the seven brothers who were the sons of the Jewish high priest named Sceva? Why do you think they were attempting to use the name of Jesus and Paul?
14. It is hard to imagine what we read about in Acts 19:18-20. Were there many rich people who had become Christians? Imagine burning books worth 50,000 days of wages of a common laborer. That would be approximately the wages of a common laborer for 160 years working six days a week!
15. Read Acts 19:11-12. Why do you suppose God was performing miracles on the basis of handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had used or touched? Was this some kind of magic as some claim? Why would God heal people who had only been touched by an apron?
16. Unfortunately, our Bible study guide does not mention the problems that were going on in the church at Corinth during this time while Paul was primarily in Ephesus. Paul apparently took a ship and traveled to Corinth and was rebuffed and treated very rudely. After a short time, he went back to Ephesus, wondering what he should do. Later, he wrote a very strong letter to the believers in Corinth which he sent with Titus. (That letter is probably the content that is in 2 Corinthians 10-13.) He waited with trepidation to see what the result would be. And that was the reason that he traveled to Macedonia and planned to go to Achaia and Corinth before going back to Jerusalem. Fortunately, he met Titus in Macedonia; Titus gave him the good news that the people of Corinth were ready, and they wanted him to come back. It was there in Corinth over the winter of A.D. 57-58 that Paul wrote the letters to Galatia and Rome.
17. Having spent some time with his friends in Corinth, Paul was ready to return to Jerusalem with the very large offerings collected from the churches in Achaia, Macedonia, and Asia Minor. (Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3)
18. In the days of Claudius (emperor of Rome from A.D. 41-54), there was apparently a severe famine which had a terrible impact on the believers in Jerusalem. In the early days of the Christian church in Jerusalem, many of the converts had shared their goods with all the believers and then had little wealth left. Apparently, there was another famine affecting the people in Jerusalem for whom Paul collected money from the believers in Asia Minor. Hoping to improve his relationship with all the believers in Judea and especially with the Christian leaders in Jerusalem, Paul saw this donation as an opportunity to build bridges.
19. Read Acts 19:23-41. Paul remained in Ephesus until that riot broke out. The riot was led by Demetrius the silversmith, complaining about the effect that Paul was having on his business and the businesses of his associates. After the riot, the believers in Ephesus felt it was necessary for Paul to leave, and they sent him away.
20. Try to imagine yourself observing that riotous crowd in Ephesus crying, "Great is Artemis of Ephesus." Note that *Diana* is the Latin name for *Artemis*. What do you think Paul would have said to them if he had had the opportunity? Would he have compared the worship of Artemis/Diana with the worship of Jesus Christ? When Paul taught in Ephesus, did all the people with different dialects and different languages hear Paul in their own languages?

21. How often do economic and financial considerations impact our beliefs and practices of religion? How many people today are making a lot of money using religion?
22. Read Acts 20:7-12. This passage has been used by some to suggest that Christians in Asia were already starting to worship on Sunday. There are a number of reasons why that is not the case. First of all, this was an evening meeting. They were using lights, (Acts 20:8) and Paul continued preaching until midnight. (Acts 20:7) Then, they continued talking after the resurrection of Eutychus until daybreak. (Acts 20:9-11) So, this was not a morning or evening worship service. Furthermore, it is likely that the service actually took place on Saturday night so that Paul could leave on the boat on Sunday morning. However, it is possible that Luke was using a different system of time reckoning so that meeting may have been on Sunday evening. If so, then it took place so he could leave on Monday morning.
23. Could you clearly answer someone who claims that the late-night meeting in Troas was the beginning of the trend regarding Sunday as a day to worship? What passages or stories from Scripture would you recite to counter their arguments? Is it any more legalistic to keep the Sabbath holy than it is to obey any of the other nine of the Ten Commandments?
24. There is no evidence that early Christians were keeping Sunday or even for calling Sunday the *Lord's day* until at least 75 years later.

Although this term [*Lord's day*] occurs frequently in the Church Fathers with the meaning of Sunday, the first conclusive evidence of such use does not appear until the latter part of the 2d century in the Apocryphal *Gospel According to Peter* (9, 12; ANF, vol. 9, p. 8), where the day of Christ's resurrection is termed the "Lord's day." Since this document was written at least three quarters of a century after John wrote the Revelation, it cannot be presented as a proof that the phrase "Lord's day" in John's time refers to Sunday.—Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1980). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*,* vol. 7, 735. [Content in brackets is added.]

25. Paul had been away from Ephesus for three or four months. So, as he had opportunity, it was his original plan to sail directly from Corinth to Palestine so that he could reach Jerusalem in time for Passover. As he was about to board the boat, he found out that some Jews were already on the boat with the specific intention to kill him on the boat. (*Acts of the Apostles* 389.2) So, once again, Paul turned his steps northward, traveling to Macedonia and around through Asia Minor on his way back to Jerusalem. With that change in plans, he knew that he could not make it to Jerusalem in time for Passover; so, he planned to make it in time for Pentecost, fifty days later.
26. Read Acts 20:15-27. Clearly, Paul had in mind to visit Jerusalem to try to mend fences there and from there to travel west on his way to Rome and possibly Spain. (Romans 15:22-29) At that point in time, Paul probably figured that he would spend the rest of his useful years working in Rome and Spain. So, when he met briefly with the Ephesian church leaders at Miletus, he talked about what he had accomplished while among them and told them that he would probably not see them again. (Acts 20:28-31)
27. One of the big issues about the final days of Paul's third missionary journey was why he wanted to go back to Jerusalem. Did the Holy Spirit specifically instruct him to do so? (Acts 20:22) If so, why was he warned by so many not to go to Jerusalem? Even prophets told him not to go. (See Acts 20:22; 21:10-14.)

28. Certainly, Paul understood the challenges of returning to Jerusalem. Even the Christian leaders of the church in Jerusalem viewed him with some skepticism. They still remembered the fact that he had originally been the chief persecutor of the church. Furthermore, there were exaggerated reports of how Paul was telling people not to get circumcised. Additionally, to the non-Christian Jewish authorities, he was nothing but a traitor and an apostate. (Acts 23:1-2)
29. Judea had always been a hotbed of revolt against the Roman government. The Pharisees were always working quietly to oppose the Roman government. In this context, the Roman government had to be constantly vigilant to put down any possible rebellion.
30. So, if you had been an advisor to Paul, would you have told him to stay away from Jerusalem? Was Paul hoping that traveling to Jerusalem with all these friends and carrying all that money would convince the Jewish Christian leaders that their fears of him were unfounded?
31. Was Paul carefully following the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Or, was he in any way stubbornly determined to do what he wanted to do? Paul was misunderstood, maligned, and mistreated, even reviled; but, he pressed on in faith.

The success attending the preaching of the gospel aroused the anger of the Jews anew. From every quarter were coming accounts of the spread of the new doctrine by which Jews were released from the observance of the rites of the ceremonial law and Gentiles were admitted to equal privileges with the Jews as children of Abraham.... His [Paul's] emphatic statement, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision" (Colossians 3:11), was regarded by his enemies as daring blasphemy, and they determined that his voice should be silenced.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 390.1. [Content in brackets is added.]

32. As we will learn in future lessons, it was because of his Roman citizenship that the Roman guards in Jerusalem were able to preserve Paul's life. Otherwise, he would have been killed in Jerusalem. The Romans were constantly watching for any kind of disturbance, especially in the temple courtyard.

Never before had the apostle approached Jerusalem with so sad a heart. He knew that he would find few friends and many enemies. He was nearing the city which had rejected and slain the Son of God and over which now hung the threatenings of divine wrath.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 397.5-398.0.

33. Was it God's plan to have Paul put his life in danger as he did?

Many of the Jews who had accepted the gospel still cherished a regard for the ceremonial law and were only too willing to make unwise concessions, hoping thus to gain the confidence of their countrymen, to remove their prejudice, and to win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the church at Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. **He felt that if by any reasonable concession he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. But he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked.**—Ellen G. White,

*The Acts of the Apostles** 405.1. [Bold type is added.]

34. Paul moved forward even in difficult circumstances, willing to sacrifice his life if necessary. Would we be willing to do that? Are we as sure as Paul was about the mission which we are called to do? If we spend most of our waking hours at work, are we being successful at carrying the gospel to our coworkers?
35. Try to imagine yourself in the councils of Satan during Paul's third missionary journey. How would you have responded to each of Paul's successes? Was Satan just repeatedly frustrated?
36. In Ephesus Paul had to meet with paganism, magic, money, and political influence.
37. If you were to take a world religions class in one of many universities in the developed world today, you would find that they talk about the miracles that Peter and Paul performed as if they were some kind of magic similar to what shamans or magicians might do today. While there are some apparent similarities, the intent and results of Paul's and Peter's miracles were completely different from those done by those others forces.
38. However, we must recognize that the day is coming when miracles will occur everywhere. Both the Devil and God will send angels who will appear as human beings on this earth.

Satanic agencies in human form will take part in this last great conflict to oppose the building up of the kingdom of God. And heavenly angels in human guise will be on the field of action.—Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*,* vol 4, 1142.7.

Christ and His angels come to us in the form of human beings, and as we converse with them, light and grace and joy fill our hearts. Our spiritual energies are quickened, and we are strengthened to do the will of God. Though we know it not, we are conversing with an angel, an angel in human guise.—Ellen G. White, *Letter 144*,* 1902, p. 8. (To Dr. and Mrs. D. H. Kress, September 18, 1902.)

39. It is only because of God's limitation on Satan's activities that Satan is unable to perform massive miracles and cause terrible persecutions of Christians even in our day. From the days of the beginning of the revolt in heaven, God has always succeeded in the long-term to defeat the Devil. Jesus has already won the great controversy. He is alive and well, living in heaven and leaving behind an empty grave. This sets Him apart from all other religious leaders.
40. Miracles still happen in our day. But, not usually in the developed world where there are so many critical sceptics. Why do you think that is? I, Kenneth Hart, personally know of resurrections from the dead which have taken place in the Philippines, New Guinea, and Bangladesh. Why not here?
41. Are you prepared for what is coming in our world? Can you imagine yourself traveling with Paul on any of his missionary journeys?

© 2018, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. *Electronic version. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: July 22, 2018

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Acts\SS-10-Acts-2018_09_08-Fin+.wpd