

# How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

## Lesson 6h: Acts 18.23 – 21.17 – Paul's Third Missionary Journey

### Introduction

Paul's third journey began with a desire to return and strengthen the churches that were established during his first and second journeys. This journey actually takes place over several years, with two of those years being at one place. During this time, Paul does not establish many new churches besides the one in Ephesus; however the details conveyed in the narrative teach us a lot about the type of man that Paul was and the burden that he carried in his ministry.

### Acts 18:23-28 – *Apollos*

What do we learn about Apollos in verses 24 and 25?

- Hellenistic Jew from Alexandria (where the OT Scriptures were translated)
- Well spoken and well-versed in the Old Testament
- He was instructed (catechized) in the way of the Lord
- He was fervent (boiling) in the Spirit
- "He taught diligently the things of the Lord" - He knew about Jesus, but perhaps not everything
- He was only familiar with John's baptism.

In today's society, Apollos would be viewed as a fantastic debater and advocate for Christianity against skeptics – both academically and spiritually.



Who were Priscilla and Aquilla and why did they take Apollos aside?

They were the couple that Paul had hooked up with back in Corinth because they shared the same trade. They took Apollos aside because he was obviously deficient in some area of his teaching and it needed to be corrected for him to be complete.

What did it mean that Apollos was only familiar with John's baptism? How did this tie into his inadequacy of knowledge concerning the way of Christ? (See also John 1:29-33, John 3:22-25, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 9:49-50)

Apollos was apparently one of John's disciples that had followed him until his imprisonment and death. He knew about Jesus and preached about Jesus, but didn't join up with Jesus and the rest of the disciples after John's death. Accordingly, he didn't know about His death and resurrection and the imparting of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This was a huge knowledge gap that needed to be filled.

Did Apollos have a successful ministry in Corinth? (See also 1 Corinthians 3:4-6)

Apparently, Apollos had a very successful ministry there in Corinth; so much so that some tried to align themselves under him and caused factions with others who aligned themselves under Paul. Paul and Apollos were not in opposition to each other, but these people used it as an opportunity to cause unrest. Paul makes it clear that while he and Apollos were both used of God, it was God who should get the glory!

### Acts 19:1-7 – *Paul encounters some disciples in Ephesus*

During Paul's travel through Galatia, he would have visited the churches established during his first missionary journey in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. His travels eventually led him to Ephesus, where he finished out his second missionary journey. Before leaving to fulfill his vow in Jerusalem, he promised to return and finish the work he started there. When he came to Ephesus, he happened upon another group of disciples.

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What did Paul mean when he asked them about whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed? (See also Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16)

He was trying to figure out whether they were these disciples were at in the big picture. Those disciples who had followed John were scripturally baptized and then empowered by the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. At that time, Christian baptism as we know it replaced the baptism given by John and Christ's early disciples.

Why did Paul rebaptize these men?

Their answer indicates that they didn't even know about the Holy Ghost. This gives away their identity. They were not even really associated with John the Baptist. They must have been baptized by someone who was baptized by John, who did not have authority to do so and did not completely teach the things taught by John. A likely candidate is Apollos.

Why did Paul lay hands on them for them to receive the Holy Spirit?

This is the same order we see back when the Samaritans received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Hands were laid upon them after baptism. Paul makes it clear in verse 2 that the normal order of things was to receive the gifts of the Spirit at salvation (verse 2 should say "when ye believed" instead of "since ye believed"). They had not received this when they believed, so it was given as a separate manifestation by Paul.

### *Acts 19:8-20 – Paul's ministry in Ephesus*

At what point did Paul leave the synagogue and take his teaching elsewhere?

It was when they completely rejected his teaching and began to speak evil of "The Way" (as Christianity was called then). It was this heart of rejection that prompted Paul to go elsewhere. At that point, they were not open to the message anymore and began to blaspheme the Holy Spirit by saying that its work was not the work of God but of Satan.

How was it that all of Asia was able to hear the gospel even though Paul stayed in one place?

By preaching at the school of Tyrannus, he had the opportunity to come in contact with people from all over the area. Most likely, people were converted and disciplined by Paul there in Ephesus and then went out to preach and reproduce, creating new disciples in new congregations. Besides Ephesus, churches may have also been established in Colosse, Hieropolis, and the seven churches of Asia, mentioned in Revelations.

Why was God doing such miraculous signs through Paul?

Paul was there working diligently for the Lord and the Lord desired that it be known that He was behind the message that Paul preached. It was a testimony to his message, that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God.

Why were the seven sons of Sceva unable to cast out the demon, even though they tried to cast it out in the name of Jesus Christ?

The power to cast out demons was only given to those who knew Christ and were called by Him to do that. It was not something that could be manufactured or mimicked by those who desired to have the same powers. This is reminiscent of Simon the Sorcerer, who wanted to buy the ability to lay his hands upon people and give them the gift of the Holy Spirit. By failing to cast the demon out and being humiliated, the true power of Christ and His presence with Paul was magnified.

What affect did the magnification of Christ have upon those who were believers?

It affected their life to the point that they gave up their sinful and wicked practices and began to devote themselves more fully to Christ. This caused the work to continue to grow and progress and multiply.

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### *Acts 19:21-22 – Paul's burden*

Sometimes the Lord allows us to see where He is going to take us to prepare us for the work ahead. However, He rarely shows us how He is going to get us there. It is a test of faith for us to believe the vision God has given to us along the road of trials between today and the point of fulfillment. This is what we begin to see with Paul in this passage

What was Paul's burden for his future?

He felt led to pass through Macedonia and Achaia, return to Jerusalem and go to Rome.

What did Paul do while he tarried in Ephesus? (See 1 Corinthians 16:1-9, 19)

Paul wrote at least 1 Corinthians during his time in Ephesus as well as ministered there because the Lord had opened a great door there and many adversaries were trying to spoil the work of the Lord.

Why did Paul send Timothy and Erastus on to Macedonia?

They were sent to prepare the offering so that it was ready to go when Paul arrived.

### *Acts 19:23-41 – Riot in Ephesus*

Ephesus was the site of the Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Not only were the Ephesians worshippers of Artemis, but all of Asia and even many parts of the ancient world. There were 36 shrines of Artemis throughout the Roman Empire with the temple at Ephesus being the preeminent worship spot. Every year, thousands of people would flock to the temple and bring business to the city of Ephesus, especially the local idol makers, who would sell the little idols to the travelers to take home or to place as votives in the temple.

Who was the main culprit in starting the riot and what was his motivation?

Demetrius, a silversmith who made idols of Artemis, was the main motivator for the riot. His motivation was purely money. He may have seen his profits dipping or started losing clientele that were throwing away their idols and worshipping God. His thought was that a large riot or insurrection against the Christians might scare them and stop them from preaching their doctrine throughout Asia.

Who stopped Paul from going to the stadium?

Local disciples stopped Paul from going into the stadium. Local Asiarchs were people from wealthy and noble families that promoted the cult of the emperor and Rome. They had high position and lots of connections. Apparently Paul had befriended some of these people and they tried to keep him from coming, knowing that his life was in danger.

What does the description of the crowd at the stadium tell us about these people?

Most of the people didn't know what was going on, but they just wanted to see a good fight. Something must have stirred up all the people. This was a total mob mentality. They were worked up, acting on emotion, and ready to do some really foolish things.

Why did the crowd reject Alexander, who stood up on behalf of the Jews?

Alexander was a Jew and therefore would have been seen as part of the problem by the Ephesians. The Jews were also against idol worship. Most Ephesians probably still categorized Christians with Jews at this time. Christianity was just a sect of Judaism.

The town clerk was the city's chief administrative officer (like a modern day mayor) and was a liaison between the city counsel and Roman authorities. He would be held responsible for the uprising by Rome and therefore it was his responsibility to calm everything down. What was his response to the uprising and the charges being brought by Demetrius?

His response was to assure them that Artemis was a great god and no one could even begin to question that. He also said that if Demetrius and his buddies had a problem, they could take it to the court system and settle it there. They could all be in trouble for having a riot.

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### Acts 20:1-12 – *Travel plans thwarted and why you shouldn't sleep in Church*

What caused Paul to cancel his direct sail from Greece back to Syria?

There were Jews that expected Paul to take the ship back to Syria and were lying wait to capture and possibly kill him. Somehow, Paul and his company got wind of this plot and took another route, back through Macedonia, that removed him from harm’s way.

Why did Paul preach so long and why were they so patient to listen to him?

Paul didn’t come through town very often and he was the missionary responsible for the establishment of all the churches throughout Asia. Paul had many things to teach them and they wanted to learn all they could from him.

Why do you think the Lord allowed this miracle to happen?

Eutychus was a young man, probably between 7 and 14 years old, based on the word, “young man” that was used. Everyone was doing what they were supposed to be doing by listening to Paul’s message. By allowing this miracle to happen, God confirmed Paul as a messenger of the Lord, and caught their attention for the rest of the evening.

### Acts 20:13-38 – *Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders*

Why did Paul want to avoid going to Ephesus but instead called for the elders to meet him in Miletus? (vs 16-17)

He knew it would take too long if he went to Ephesus. Everyone would want to see him and it would take him awhile to get away. By going to Miletus and calling the elders, he was able to address the whole church through the leaders and save valuable time.

How did Paul describe his ministry to the Ephesians? (vs 18-21)

Paul gave himself completely as a servant, enduring many personal trials during his ministry there. He gave them everything they needed and even went house to house teaching the Word of God. He was uniform and unashamed in his testimony to all people, regardless of whether they were Jews or Gentiles. All of them needed the Lord.

What does Paul mean when he said he was, “bound in the Spirit”? How had God communicated to him what would happen in Jerusalem? How does this scenario relate to Paul’s desires that he expressed in Philippians 3:8-10? (vs 22-25)

Paul indicated that the Lord was leading him to go to Jerusalem, thus he was “bound in the Spirit” to be obedient to God. However, the Lord was also letting Paul know through the prophets in the churches that he would encounter serious trouble in Jerusalem. By having a burden from the Lord to do something that he knew would bring him into danger, he was able to relate to Christ and “fellowship of His sufferings” because Christ was in a similar, but more difficult situation in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Did Paul hold back in his preaching to the Ephesians? (vs 26-27)

No, Paul shared everything with the Ephesians and didn’t hold back anything that the Lord had taught him. For this reason, he was not guilty of being negligent at his job.

What does Paul say about the calling of the elders in Ephesus and their job description? (vs 28)

They were made elders by the Holy Spirit. The church had obviously ordained them, but they were set apart by the Holy Spirit for that work. Their job was to feed (shepherd) the flock on behalf of Christ and in accordance with His will.

What does Paul warn the Ephesians that would soon happen? (vs 29-31)

False teachers would come from within and without to lead people astray.

What is Paul doing in this farewell address? (vs 32-35)

These people were disciples of Paul. Paul was detaching them from himself and attaching them directly to God. He let them know that God was sufficient to take care of them and their problems. They didn’t need him anymore. He just set an example.

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### *Acts 21:1-6 – Journey to Tyre*

Why did the Lord keep revealing Paul's future through the prophets at each church he visited?

I believe the Lord kept revealing these things to Paul because it was part of a trial or test the Lord was putting upon him before he arrived in Jerusalem. The Lord allows us to go through difficulties, sometimes even at the hands of His people, to refine us in His service. Also, these churches needed to know what was in store for Paul so that they might intervene in prayer for his safety and God's will to be done. Because of their knowledge of what awaited Paul, he became an example to them.

### *Acts 21:7-17 – Journey to Jerusalem*

Apparently, Philip settled in Caesarea after his missionary journey through Samaria and the surrounding area. We last saw him in Caesarea in Acts 8:40

What does it mean that Philip was one of the seven? (see Acts 6:3-6)

Philip was one of the seven original deacons ordained by the church at Jerusalem.

How did Paul respond to their pleas for him to avoid Jerusalem?

It was breaking Paul's heart to hear their cries for him to avoid Jerusalem. Their deep love for him was obviously being conveyed and it really touched Paul. It also stirred and fed his natural desire to avoid the pain that awaited him. However, Paul brushed it aside and stated emphatically that he was willing to suffer and die, if necessary, to accomplish the Lord's plan for his life.

After Paul explained his willingness to suffer and even die for Christ, what was the response of the disciples?

Their response was to resolve that above all, let the Lord's will be done.

### *Assignment:*

Read Acts 21:18 – 24:27 in preparation for the next lesson