

## Completion of Paul's Third Missionary Journey Acts 20:1 - 21:17

### Introduction

Paul's third missionary journey started by revisiting the churches which he had started in Galatia and Phrygia. Then he headed to Ephesus to keep a promise he had made: *I will return again to you, God willing* (Acts 18:21). Paul spent over two years in Ephesus preaching the gospel and building up the church. However, when angry silversmiths started a riot, Paul decided to move on. As he journeyed toward Jerusalem, he felt in his spirit that there would be trouble for him there. Paul did not know what lay ahead for him, but he guessed it might be *chains and tribulations* (Acts 20:23) and, possibly, even death. He did not expect to return to the churches he had started on his three missionary journeys. He hoped to go to Rome and then to Spain to preach the gospel (Acts 19:21; Romans 15:24, 28).

Paul spent the end of his third missionary journey saying his goodbyes. There were many tears shed. His loving friends tried to change his mind about going to Jerusalem. Paul stood firm in his desire to go and said he was willing to *die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus* (Acts 21:13).

### Outline of Acts 20:1-21:17

- I. Revisiting Local Churches - Acts 20:1-12
- II. Reunion with the Ephesian Elders - Acts 21:13-38
- III. Returning to Jerusalem - Acts 21:1-17

#### I. Revisiting Local Churches - Acts 20:1-12

Paul had planned to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8-9). Instead, he left shortly after the riot caused by the silversmiths. He traveled up the coast to Troas (2 Corinthians 2:12-13) and then went by ship to Macedonia. He stayed there for a while.

In Macedonia, Paul visited the churches and *encouraged them with many words*. During that time he wrote 2 Corinthians and, possibly, Galatians. Paul's next stop was Greece (Achaia) where he spent three months, probably during the winter of A.D. 56. While there, he wrote his letter to the Romans (Romans 15:22-29) telling of his plans to visit Jerusalem with a **donation** for the poor. After that, he planned to travel to Rome.

Paul was probably hoping to get to Jerusalem in time for the Passover celebration because he had planned to sail directly to Syria. However, he found out about a plan the Jews had to kill him. He decided to avoid the risk and take a longer route by land through Macedonia.

While Paul retraced his steps through Macedonia, a group of seven men gathered at Troas to meet him and accompany him to Jerusalem. When Paul reached Philippi, Luke (who had remained there since Paul's second missionary journey) rejoined Paul, and they left for Troas. They joined those who had been waiting for them and stayed in Troas for seven days.

Paul joined the local church meeting on the day before he would depart for Jerusalem. The disciples in Troas met to *break bread*, which was a meal to **fellowship**. It would be similar to a "pot luck" today. It also included taking the Lord's Supper (communion). This is the first Scripture reference to Sunday (the first day of the week) as the meeting day for the early church. Later, it was referred to as the Lord's Day.

The meeting was held in the evening (probably because many of the people were slaves and would have had to work during the day). Paul spoke and continued his message until midnight. This seems like a very long sermon,

but the believers in Troas had been waiting for Paul to arrive for a long time. The room was crowded with people and lit by many smoky lamps. A *young man* (probably around 8 to 14 years old), named Eutychus, fell asleep while sitting at a window three stories off the ground. Luke, who was a doctor by trade, records that Eutychus was dead.

Paul went down to the boy, *fell on him*, embraced him, and encouraged the disciples by announcing that *his life is in him*. Eutychus, whose name means “fortunate,” was definitely a fortunate young man. He was alive and the believers were very comforted. After caring for Eutychus, they shared the Lord’s Supper. Then, Paul continued talking until daybreak. It was Monday morning and time to continue the journey to Jerusalem.

## II. Reunion with the Ephesian Elders - Acts 20:13-38

Paul’s eight travelling companions went by ship to Assos, but Paul decided to walk the twenty miles instead. He then joined them on the ship and they set sail. Four days later, they arrived at the city of Miletus which was about 30 miles from Ephesus. Because Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost, he did not want to take the time to travel up to Ephesus. However, he did want to see his friends, the church elders. Paul sent for them so that he could give them a final farewell and encouragement. He knew that he would not see the elders again, and he had some important last words for them.

First, Paul asked the elders to look to himself and the example he had set for them. They had seen Paul serve the Lord in **humility**. Paul was following the example of Jesus who had *humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross* (Philippians 2:8). Second, he reminded the elders that the gospel was for everyone, Jew and Gentile, and that he had preached it to both eagerly. He also wanted the elders to remember that all people were saved in the

same way: by turning away from sin and turning to God through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, Paul reminded the elders that he had relied on the Holy Spirit in his ministry (See Acts 16:6-10). This was important because Paul wanted the elders to rely on the Holy Spirit also. Paul explained that The Holy Spirit had filled him with a strong need to go to Jerusalem. As he traveled from city to city, the Holy Spirit also made it clear to him (probably through those with the gift of prophecy) that *chains and tribulations* awaited him, but Paul did not change his mind. He was ready to give his life for the gospel. The Lord Jesus had given him a ministry, and he wanted to complete it with joy. Serving God joyfully was the most important thing in Paul’s life. What is the most important thing in your life? How are you using your life to serve God? Are you serving Him with joy? Will you make joy a goal for your life, as Paul did?<sup>1</sup>

Paul also took time to remind the elders of the responsibility the Holy Spirit had given them. They were to *shepherd the church of God*, guide it, guard it, and even lay down their own lives to protect each member of the flock. God had purchased the church with the blood of *His only begotten Son* (John 3:16). Now, He had given the elders authority to care for it. God and the power of His word would work in them as they believed and obeyed. As a result, they would be built up and enjoy the fullness of their inheritance. What better inheritance can you ever hope for than eternal life with Christ?

In closing, Paul again asked the elders to look at the example he himself had given to them. He had never made status or wealth a priority. Silver, gold, and fine clothes were not important to him. He had worked with his own hands, making tents, to pay for his own needs and the needs of those with him. Anything extra was given to *help the weak*. When Paul finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with the elders. Their hearts ached

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about Paul’s joy, look up Philippians 1:4,18,25,26; 2:2,17,18,28; 3:1,3; 4:1,4,10)?

because Paul had said they would *see his face no more*. They expressed their love for him and accompanied him to the ship.

### III. Returning to Jerusalem - Acts 21:1-17

Departing from Miletus, Paul's ship sailed to Patara. At Patara, he and his companions transferred to a large cargo ship that took a direct route across the open sea to Phoenicia, a distance of about 400 miles. The only land they sighted on the journey was the island of Cyprus.

The ship stopped at Tyre in Phoenicia to unload its cargo. This took seven days. During that time, Paul visited with believers there. The church in Tyre had probably been established by believers who left Jerusalem after Stephen was martyred (see Acts 11:19).

In the church, there were prophets who knew *through the Spirit* that Paul would suffer if he went to Jerusalem. They tried to discourage him from going, but Paul was determined to press on. Even though it was only seven days, a close bond developed between Paul and the believers at Tyre. When it was time for him to leave, the whole church family went to see him off. Before Paul left, they all knelt and prayed.

From Tyre, the ship sailed to Ptolemais where Paul and his companions took one day to visit with the believers there. The next day they traveled to Caesarea. It is not clear whether they went by sea or by land.

In Caesarea, Paul's group stayed with Philip, the evangelist. He had evangelized the Samaritans, an Ethiopian eunuch, and towns along the coast of Palestine, including Caesarea (Acts 8). Now, about 20 years after his ministry had started, Philip was still in Caesarea and had four virgin daughters who possessed the gift of prophecy.

Agabus the prophet arrived in Caesarea to warn Paul about Jerusalem. Agabus took Paul's belt, a long narrow piece of cloth which wrapped around the waist several times, and tied up his

own feet and hands saying *thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'* When Paul's friends heard the prophecy, they wept and pleaded with him to stay away from Jerusalem. Paul was heart broken that he was causing his friends such sadness. Have you ever disappointed one of your friends? Perhaps they asked you to spend the night, but your mom said that you could not. It's hard to tell your friend no because you don't like disappointing them. But, you know that the right thing to do is obey your parents. Paul knew he had to obey the Holy Spirit and go to Jerusalem. When his friends realized that they could not change his mind, they prayed that *the will of the Lord be done*. Some of the disciples joined Paul's group, and they made the 65 mile trip to Jerusalem. One of the men that joined them was Mnason of Cyprus and he gladly opened his home for the believers to stay in. †

### Prayer

When you pray, remember to add 'Your will be done, Lord.' It is good and right for believers to pray, but we do not know if God's will is the same as our will. In the end, no matter what we think we want or need, God knows what is best and His plan is always perfect.

### Memory Verse

Luke 22:42 (*Jesus prayed, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."*)

### Vocabulary

**tribulations** - great trial, pain, or unhappiness

**donation** - the act of giving a gift, oftentimes a gift of money

**fellowship** - a close companionship of friends sharing a similar interest (or religion)

**humility** - the act of being modest in behavior, attitude, or spirit.

**Questions for Acts Lesson 17**

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

**DAY ONE: Review last weeks lesson and notes.**

1. What did you learn about Paul and his caring for others?

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2. What impressed you most about Paul in last week's lesson?

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**DAY TWO: Read Acts 21:17-30.**

3. a. How were Paul and his traveling companions received in Jerusalem?

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b. Who did Paul meet with the day after he arrived in Jerusalem?

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c. What did Paul tell them? What was their response?

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4. a. What had the Jewish believers been told about Paul? Give verse? Verse: \_\_\_\_\_

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- b. From all you have learned about Paul in the Book of Acts, was this true? \_\_\_\_\_

- c. What did James and the elders advise Paul to do in order to show that he honored and kept the law? Did Paul follow this advice? YES or NO

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5. a. Who stirred up the crowds against Paul? \_\_\_\_\_

- b. From verse 28, what were their four complaints against Paul?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY THREE: Read Acts 21:31-22:5.**

6. a. Mark each statement T (true) or F (false). Give the verse where you find the true statements.

( T or F ) The crowds wanted to kill Paul. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

( T or F ) The commander of the garrison helped beat Paul. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

( T or F ) All Jerusalem was in an uproar. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

( T or F ) The commander ordered that Paul be put in chains. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

( T or F ) The commander thought Paul was an Egyptian who had led a band of assassins. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

7. a. What two things did the commander want to know about Paul? Give verse. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

b. Why was he unable to find out the truth?

8. ( T or F ) The crowd was so violent that the soldiers had to carry Paul.

9. a. What did Paul ask permission to do? \_\_\_\_\_

b. What caused the crowd to become silent? \_\_\_\_\_

c. What facts did Paul tell the crowd that would gain their support and sympathy?

**DAY FOUR: Read Acts 22:6-21.**

10. a. What event of his life did Paul relate to the crowd?

b. ★(Memory Question) Give the chapter in Acts where this event was first recorded.

11. a. Who had gone to visit Paul after his experience on the road to Damascus?

b. ? (Thought Question) Why had he gone to see Paul?

c. Why had God chosen Paul? Give verse(s)?

12. While Paul was praying in the temple in Jerusalem, who did he see? What two things was Paul told to do and why?

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**DAY FIVE: Read Acts 22:2130.**

13. a. What words broke the silence of the crowd? \_\_\_\_\_

- b. What words did the crowd shout? \_\_\_\_\_

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- c. What actions did the crowd take? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Circle the statements which explain how the Roman commander responded.

He had his men shoot into the crowd.      He ordered Paul to be taken to the barracks.

He ordered Paul to be scourged.      He arrested all the men in the crowd.

15. a. What piece of information did Paul reveal at this time?

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- b. In what way was Paul superior to the commander?

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- c. Who was afraid? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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16. What happened the next day? Circle the correct statements.

Paul was released from his chains.

Paul was given a medal for bravery.

Paul was taken before the chief priests and council.

Paul reported the commander for unlawful conduct.



VOCABULARY FOR ACTS LESSON 17

*"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...  
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."*

— Wilfred Funk

**DAY ONE: Write the definition of the vocabulary word.**

**donation** - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**fellowship** - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**tribulation** - \_\_\_\_\_

**humility** - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s).** (Synonym is a word / phrase that means the same thing.)

**donation** - .....gift ..... offering ..... charity

**tribulation** - ..... comfort .....hard time..... suffering

**humility** .....modesty ..... pride .....meekness

**fellowship**..... alliance ..... togetherness ..... friendship

**DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>donation</b>     | great trial, pain, or unhappiness   |
| <b>fellowship</b>   | the act of giving a gift, oftentimes a gift of money                      |
| <b>humility</b>     | a close companionship of friends sharing a similar interest (or religion) |
| <b>tribulations</b> | the act of being modest in behavior, attitude, or spirit.                 |

**DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary word(s).**

Unscramble the tiles to reveal the definition. Then write the word that goes with the definition from a previous lesson.

**WORD:**    \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

**DEFINITION:**

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# ANSWER KEY

**WORD:** **CONVERT**

**DEFINITION:** NEW BELIEVER OR FOLLOWER