

The Historical Stories of the Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 12 Acts 18:23 – Acts

Paul and Luke, his silent companion, arrive in Antioch and report to the church all the events and accomplishments of the past few years. After traveling over 2,455 miles, their second missionary journey is officially over and Paul is eager to start a new trip.

The Gospel of Mark

Because of Claudius' decree to have all the Jew leave Rome, very few Christians remained in the city. Those who had heard the gospel in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost were Jews and proselytes. When they left Jerusalem to return home, they continued evangelizing other Jews only. They did not know that the gospel could be delivered to Gentiles without their converting to Judaism first. With the decree of Claudius, the Christian leadership departed the city. Aquila and Pricilla are just two examples of the fine Christian leadership that left Rome in late AD 49 or early AD 50. Mark was a Roman citizen of mixed descent; his father was Greek and his mother was Jewish. It is at this point in the historical stories that we place the writing of the Gospel of Mark in AD 53-54.

The Gospel does not furnish enough information to accurately date its origin; however, there are significant indicators that place the writing near this time. First, Mark is with Barnabas on their missionary journey to the west. They begin by sailing to Cyprus and from there, on to the western countries. Second, Mark does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Third, Mark intends for his Gospel to be read among the Romans because he carefully translates many words which only the Roman audience would have readily understood.¹⁶⁷ Fourth, Mark explains certain Jewish usages fully so the Romans will understand them.¹⁶⁸ Fourth, Mark uses certain Latin words not found in any of the other Gospels.¹⁶⁹ Fifth, Mark quotes from the Old Testament only twice because it is not useful to the Romans who have never read it.¹⁷⁰

By the time Paul writes to the Romans, a church he has never visited and did not establish, it is clear that he does not want to build on anyone else's Gentile ministry. Knowing what we know about Paul and John Mark, we can assume that he is speaking of the established ministry of John Mark and Barnabas in Rome. Paul and John Mark will reconcile their differences, but not until after Paul writes his letter to Rome.

Mark's letter is a wonderful written testimony and witness to the city of Rome when Christians are fleeing in fear of Claudius Caesar.

¹⁶⁷ "Boanerges" (Mark 3:17); "Talitha cumi" (Mark 5:41); "Corban" (Mark 7:11); "Bartimaeus" (Mark 10:46); "Abba" (Mark 14:36); "Eloi," (Mark 15:34)

¹⁶⁸ Mark 7:3; Mark 14:3; Mark 14:12; Mark 15:42

¹⁶⁹ "Speculator" (Mark 6:27, rendered, "executioner;" "soldier of his guard"), "xestes" (a corruption of sextarius, rendered "pots," Mark 7:4, 8), "quadrans" (Mark 12:42, rendered "a farthing"), "centurion" (Mark 15:39, 44-45)

¹⁷⁰ Mark 1:2; Mark 15:28

Paul's third missionary journey begins Through Galatia and Phrygia

Acts 18:²³ And having spent some time *there*, he departed and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

It is AD 54, and Paul begins his travel through Galatia and Phrygia speaking to all the members of the church. Luke leaves a great deal of detail out of this part of the story because he was not with Paul and, therefore, not an eyewitness to the events. Derby and Lystra were in Galatia. Iconium and Pisidian Antioch were in Phrygia. Paul visited all these towns on his first missionary journey and established churches there. They were all part of his second journey save Pisidian Antioch. Luke does not tell us which cities Paul is visiting on this third journey; however, Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians which states that he will write to in the winter of AD 57 – 58 from Corinth. In that letter we learn that Paul stayed an extended period in Galatian because of a thorn in his flesh. It is safe to say that the problem was his eyesight since he says, "For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me."¹⁷¹ From these two regions, Paul makes his way with help to Ephesus.

A Jew named Apollo

Acts 18:²⁴ Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; ²⁶ and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace; ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

The city of Alexandria was established by Alexander the Great in 332 BC who had placed a large colony of Jews in the city, and by AD 54, one third of the city was Jewish. A great university stood in the city along with the famous Alexandrian library. Philo's Jewish Alexandrian philosophy flourished there and it was from this background that Apollos emerged. He was a dynamic speaker who knew the Old Testament well and could debate it with the best of the best. Apollos had been baptized by John the Baptist and knew John's message about the coming Messiah who would be the Son of God. He had heard John preach about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but he was not at the Cross, he did not see the resurrection of the Lord, and he was not present on the Day of Pentecost. Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak and then gently and lovingly filled him in on the rest of the gospel story that he knew nothing about. Excited and thrilled at the news, he departed for Corinth to share his newfound knowledge with all.

Paul in Ephesus, Tongues and the Holy Spirit

Acts 19: ¹ And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, ² and he said

¹⁷¹ Galatians 4:15

to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they *said* to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." ³And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying. ⁷And there were in all about twelve men.

The twelve men that Paul stumbled onto are not disciples of Apollos, but crude disciples of John the Baptist who had left Israel before hearing the news of the risen Lord. We know that they are not disciples of Apollos because he taught about the Holy Spirit even before he had heard the rest of the story from Aquila and Pricilla. These twelve disciples had been baptized by John but they had not heard John's message about the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul begins to explain to them the complete story and the Holy Spirit falls upon them and they begin to speak in known tongues just like the Jews on the Day of Pentecost and the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius.

The miracle of speaking in tongues is essential to the validity of Paul as the apostle chosen out of season. Peter was present and in charge on both occasions when the miracle of the tongues occurred before. Luke's Acts of the Apostles is essentially a letter proving that Paul was just as much an apostle as Peter; therefore, it was necessary for Paul to preside over the undisputable presence of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by the believers' speaking in known tongues as He fell upon them. Throughout the following 40 years of recorded Scripture and history of the church, these three events never occur again in the church. Each time this miracle occurred, it was for the purpose of proving to the Jews at the event the truth of the Gospel of Christ.

Three months in Ephesus and then two years in Asia

Acts 19: ⁸And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God. ⁹But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

For thirteen Sabbaths Paul witnesses in the synagogue in Ephesus trying to persuade the Jews to accept the Lord. Some do accept the truth, but many do not, and so Paul leaves the synagogue and spends two years teaching in the School of Tyrannus which owned a large lecture area. It was probably used in the mornings for medical lectures and the training of physicians. Luke, a physician, probably influenced Paul's opportunity to use this hall everyday for two years. The Codex Bezae, one of the oldest and most reliable copies of the New Testament, includes the period in which Paul was able to use the hall each day. He could use the hall for five hours, from just before the noon meal until two hours before sunset. In this setting, Paul could speak to Jews and Greeks from all over Asia who want to hear the message. He will not leave Ephesus until AD 56 - 57.

Miracles at the hands of Paul, disaster at the hands of Jews

Acts 19: ¹¹And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. ¹³But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." ¹⁴And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. ¹⁸Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. ¹⁹And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and *began* burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

Luke gives insight into some of Paul's ministry during the time that he remained in Ephesus. Like Peter, whose shadow could heal people as he passed by, Luke describes how articles of material touched by Paul could be delivered to the sick and they would be healed.

Paul also dealt with the demon-possessed and imitators of the true apostles just as Peter faced the magicians and sorcerers. In this case, seven Jews attempt to imitate the ministry of Paul by casting out demons. The demons proclaim that they know Jesus and have heard of Paul, but they have no knowledge of these seven men. They recognize that the seven men are not backed by the power of God and proceed to brutally beat them. The episode causes all the magicians and sorcerers in Asia to present their black magic materials and books and burn them in public view. In Paul's day the value was 50,000 pieces of silver. Since Asia was mainly Greek, a silver coin was probably a Greek drachmae or a Latin denarius. If these were one ounce a piece, at today's value of silver, they would be worth approximately \$875,000.¹⁷²

A desire to go to Jerusalem after Macedonia, then to Rome

Acts 19: ²¹Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

While still in Ephesus, Paul expresses his desire to see Rome after ministering in the Grecian area made up of Macedonia and Achaia. The ministry in Rome was already established. It was not Paul's desire to establish a ministry there but to enjoy a fellowship with the ministry.¹⁷³

¹⁷² 2010 price of silver \$17.50 per ounce

¹⁷³ Romans 15:12

Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, Paul stays in Asia

Acts 19: ²²And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

Near the end of Paul's two years of speaking in the Court of Tyrannus, Paul sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia to make preparations for his arrival. While they are gone a conflict occurs in Ephesus. Luke does not tell us the reason for Paul's delay, but Paul gives this information in his first letter to the Corinthians.¹⁷⁴ Paul thought that the door of opportunity was opening for a great harvest of souls in Ephesus. Pentecost came in May and May is also the month of the festival of Artemis. The festival would bring hundreds, if not thousands, of people into Ephesus. However, the disturbance in Ephesus caused Paul to leave before Pentecost occurred.

A disturbance in Ephesus

Acts 19: ²³And about that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; ²⁵these he gathered together with the workmen of similar *trades*, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. ²⁶"And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods *at all*. ²⁷"And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship should even be dethroned from her magnificence." ²⁸And when they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹And the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. ³⁰And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. ³¹And also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater.

The New Testament Scripture tells of two men in Paul's ministry named Gaius. One is a Macedonian who cared for Paul while he was in Corinth. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans to him.¹⁷⁵ Paul baptized this man and his family while he was in Corinth. The other Gaius is a man from Derbe who joined Paul on this last missionary journey as he passed through Galatia and continued with Paul all the way to Jerusalem. It is this Gaius who was dragged by the mob into the theater that day.

Aristarchus was a convert from Thessalonica who joined Paul two years before when he was in Macedonia. He will be with Paul when he sails to Rome and is mentioned in the greetings in the letters to the Colossians and Philemon.¹⁷⁶ Paul was not with these two when the mob came to drag them away. It was Paul's desire to join them in the theater but the Asiarchs tried to convince him not to go. Asiarchs were wealthy public patrons and leaders who underwrote various events for the public good,

¹⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 16:8-9

¹⁷⁵ Romans 16:23

¹⁷⁶ Colossians 4:10 & Philemon 1:24

especially in the areas of games and religious functions. Paul had won the hearts of these men, and they were not willing for Paul to risk his life with the mob in the theater, especially since most of the mob did not know the reason for the gathering. The artisans had stirred the mob into a frenzy to run Paul out of town before the festival of Artemis in order to assure the profits from the sale of their silver idols.

The confusion in the theater in Ephesus

Acts 19: ³²So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and the majority did not know for what cause they had come together. ³³And some of the crowd concluded *it was* Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. ³⁴But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a *single* outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ³⁵And after quieting the multitude, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, and of the *image* which fell down from heaven? ³⁶"Since then these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. ³⁷"For you have brought these men *here* who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸"So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are *available*; let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹"But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. ⁴⁰"For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's affair, since there is no *real* cause *for it*; and in this connection we shall be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." ⁴¹And after saying this he dismissed the assembly.

Alexander was an Ephesian Jew who was pressed into the leadership position to speak on behalf of all the Jews. It was his intent to show that the Jews were not in sympathy with Paul and the Christians in Ephesus. After the two hours of outcry, it is clear from Luke's record that the town clerk was successful in calming the mob and ultimately dismissing them.

Several important letters were written by Paul during his two year stay in Ephesus.

The first letter to the Corinthians - AD 57

It was Paul's desire to go to Macedonia from Ephesus and then on to Jerusalem, but news reached Paul that changed his plans. Abuse and contentions had arisen in Corinth because of the ministry of Apollos, a letter they had written to Paul concerning Apollos, news from the household of Chloe, and news from Stephanas and his two friends.¹⁷⁷ The purposes of Paul's letter were to correct the errors that had sprung up, remedy the abuse, and correct the disorderly conduct in the church. Paul sent the letter with Titus and an anonymous believer.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Corinthians 16:17

¹⁷⁸ 2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 8:6, 16-18

The letter to the Galatians – AD 57

During Paul's time in Ephesus he also wrote a letter to the churches in Galatia. These were Gentile churches that he had founded on his first journey.¹⁷⁹ Paul had made two visits to the churches since founding them, and while in Ephesus, he took the time to deal with the Judaizer problem that had begun to infiltrate Galatia. The letter is similar to the letter he would write to the Romans emphasizing that salvation is by grace and the works of the Law of Moses adds nothing to that salvation.

The Gospel of Matthew – AD 57

As Paul is preparing to leave Ephesus and continue his third missionary journey, Matthew takes the opportunity to write his Gospel. Written primarily to the Jews, Matthew attempts to answer all the questions about the Messiah that a Jew would ask. It is his intent to prove that Jesus is the Messiah for whom the Jews have long awaited.

The Gospel of Luke – AD 57 - 62

While accompanying Paul in Ephesus, Luke most likely wrote his account of the Gospel to Theophilus, the same man he addresses the Acts of the Apostles many years later. The Gospel of Luke presents the Gospel to meet the needs of the Gentiles. Since Luke was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus, his account is from Paul. The Gospel meets the needs of all the churches Paul has established on his missionary journeys.

On to Macedonia

Acts 20:¹And after the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he departed to go to Macedonia.

²And when he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. ³And *there* he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia.

Paul tended to the churches in Macedonia which included Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica, towns that had attempted to destroy him in past years but were now more amiable to him. From Macedonia he traveled to Corinth where he wintered for three months, spending his time ministering and writing his letter to the Romans.

The plot against Paul is from the Jews, not the Judaizers. The Jews had given Paul great grief in the past and Gallio's defense infuriated them so much that they beat Sosthenes their leader, in public view. They had been waiting for an opportunity to kill Paul and the ship to Syria was the perfect opportunity. Paul learned of the plot and changed his plans. From Corinth, Paul traveled by land back up through Macedonia. He wanted to be in Jerusalem by Passover, but this change of plans would cause him not to meet his goal.

The Book of Romans - AD 58

In Corinth, Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, a church he did not establish and had never visited. It was a church he wanted to visit and would ultimately do so although under the bondage of prison chains at first. While staying the winter in Corinth at the home of Gaius,¹⁸⁰ Paul wrote an explanation of the great doctrines which will guide Christianity for all time.

¹⁷⁹ Acts 16:6; Galatians 1:8; Galatians 4:13-19

¹⁸⁰ Romans 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:14