

ACTS AT A GLANCE
A Thirteen-Lesson Overview of the Book of Acts

Lesson Ten – Chapters 18:23 - 21:6

1. The Third Missionary Journey Begins (Acts 18:23)

- 1.1. After spending “*some days*” with the brethren at Antioch, Paul departed on a journey to strengthen the churches he had previously established (Acts 18:23).
- 1.1. The trip is commonly called Paul’s third missionary journey.
- 1.2. This trip will take Paul back through Asia Minor (Acts 18:23-20:1), with a special emphasis on events at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-20:1), on to the area of Macedonia – e.g., Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea (Acts 20:1-2), and down to Greece – probably Corinth (Acts 20:2-5). Then in Acts 20:6-21:6; Luke recorded events that occurred on the way back home.
- 1.3. No specific traveling companions are listed at the start of the journey but later we learn that Luke joined him, perhaps in Philippi (Acts 20:5). Also with him at various times were Timothy and Erastus (Acts 20:22); Gaius and Aristarchus (Acts 19:29); Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, Gaius of Derbe, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia (Acts 20:4).

2. Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23) – Once again Paul first visited the churches he had planted “*in all the regions of Galatia and Phrygia ... strengthening the churches*” (Acts 18:23).

3. Ephesus (Acts 18:24-20:1)

3.1. The Work of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

- a. In Acts 19:24-28 Luke presented, as it were, a parenthetical insert about Apollos’ work at Ephesus. Perhaps he does so to provide background for what is covered in the following section (Acts 19:1-7).
- b. Apollos had many good attributes. He was (a) an excellent public speaker, (b) very knowledgeable of the scriptures, (c) zealous, and (d) bold (Acts 19:24-26).
- c. But there was a very serious deviancy in his knowledge – he accepted the baptism of John rather than the baptism of Jesus (Acts 19:25). He was sincere but somehow he had never learned that the baptism of John was temporary – pointing forward to the baptism of Christ that replaced it.
- d. The godly couple, Aquila and Priscilla, “*took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately*”(Acts 19:26). No additional information is given about his reaction but the context suggests that he repented and received the baptism of Christ as did the twelve in Acts 20:1-5).

- e. There are some good lessons to be learned from this account:
 - The private correction of Apollos reminds us of Paul's instructions in Gal 6:1: *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."*
 - False teaching has bad results. It had apparently caused the 12 disciples in Acts 20:1-5 to err. If not confronted and corrected, both they and Apollos could have lost their souls.
 - Apollos was a most impressive preacher but at least in this area, he was wrong. This underscores the importance of being like those at Berea who *"received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11).
- f. Following this, Apollos traveled to Achaia (including Corinth) preaching the word (Acts 19:27-28).

3.2. Disciples of John Were Baptized and Received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7)

- a. The following section addresses a group of twelve disciples that Paul encountered at Ephesus who shared the misconceptions of Apollos. It is likely that he had taught them.
- b. Paul's first question was, *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"* Their answer indicated great confusion as in, 'What in the world are you talking about! We have never even heard of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 19:2).
- c. 'If that is so,' Paul asked, *"into what then were you baptized?"* (Acts 20:3). For those early Christians, spiritual gifts were a natural follow-on to a proper baptism into Christ. The failure to possess such gifts made Paul wonder about the legitimacy of their baptism.
- d. Their baptism was the same as that of Apollos. When Paul corrected their related misconceptions, they repented and were re-baptized into and by the authority of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:5).
- e. This clearly indicates that not all so-called baptisms are the same. Some please God and some do not. An improper baptism will not provide forgiveness of sins. The only cure is to emulate these twelve – to re-pent and be re-baptized in the baptism of Christ. This truth certainly applies to those who were baptized as children, those sprinkled or poured rather than immersed, and those who were baptized as some sort of 'symbol' rather than for forgiveness of sin.
- f. After this deficiency was addressed, Paul laid his hand on them and they received gifts of the Spirit (Acts 19:6).

3.3. Paul Preaches in the School of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10)

- a. As usual Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue with mixed success. Some became disciples. Others not only rejected the truth but also stirred up other to oppose Paul's work (Acts 20:8-9).
- b. After about three months, Paul and those who had been converted moved their center of operation and meetings from the synagogue to a school building – the school of Trynnanus. Paul continued his work from this venue for two years and amazingly, *"all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"* (Acts 19:9-10).

3.4. Miracles Performed at Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20)

- a. The Holy Spirit is in charge of how His gifts are dispensed. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *"The same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."* (1 Cor 12:11). In Ephesus, the Holy Spirit *"worked unusual miracles by the hand of Paul"* (Acts 19:11).
- b. Local so-called exorcists were impressed and attempted to exploit Paul's methods to do their own miracles. But the demons they addressed were not at all impressed. Instead of being expelled they beat up these so-called exorcists (Acts 19:11-16).
- c. Such true miracles by Paul and the exposure of the impotence of these imposters had God's intended results. Men were sobered and their attention brought to bear on the words of Paul. They learned the truth, repented, and obeyed it (Acts 19:17-18).
- d. Their repentance was not just an empty gesture. They proved its sincerity by bringing forth *"fruits worthy of repentance"* (Matt 3:8). In this case, those *"fruits"* included the willing destruction of very valuable book of magic (Acts 19:19).

3.5. Timothy and Erastus Sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:21-22) – Late in his stay at Ephesus, Paul *"sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time"* (Acts 19:22). Paul's total stay at Ephesus was about three years (Acts 20:31).

3.6. Demetrius Cause an Uproar at Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)

- a. *"And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way"* (Acts 19:23). Paul's preaching was resulting in a number of converts each of whom abandoned idolatry and ceased buying the trinkets that accompanied such a religion (Acts 19:23-24).
- b. Silversmiths like Demetrius were not happy. *"He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade ... [and it] is in danger of falling into disrepute"* (Acts 19:25, 27). Demetrius succeeded in stirring up first his fellow workmen then many others into an unruly mob.

- c. They brought an amalgamation of confused and trumped up charges against the Christians but none that were related to criminal or civil violations of law (Acts 19:37). So the city clerk *“dismissed the assembly”* (Acts 19:40).
 - d. *“After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia”* Acts 20:1).
1. **Macedonia** (Acts 20:1-2) – *“Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece.”*
 2. **Greece** (Acts 20:2-5) – No details are provided about Paul’s work in Greece (e.g., Athens, Corinth) except that he stayed three months.
 3. **The Trip Home** (Acts 20:3-21:6)
 - 3.1. Macedonia: A Death Plot Causes a Route Change (Acts 20:3-5)
 - a. Paul’s intention was to sail from Greece directly to Syria in hopes that he would arrive by late summer in time for the Feast of Passover (Acts 20:3, 16).
 - b. But his plans changed when another Jewish death threat was discovered. Instead, he traveled back up to Macedonia. Paul then sailed from Philippi over to Troas then down the coast of Asia Minor to home (Acts 36).
 - 3.2. Troas: Eutychus Falls from Loft (Acts 20:6-12)
 - a. After a five-day voyage over the Aegean Sea, Paul and his companion arrived at Troas (Acts 20:6).
 - b. There they waited seven days so that they could meet with all the brethren at the next Sunday when they customarily met to partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7).
 - c. There in any upper room with many lamps Paul preached to them, continuing all night long (Acts 20:8). One can sense his urgency in delivering these ‘final words.’ There were so many spiritual dangers and so much they needed to hear – yet so little time.
 - d. About midnight a young man named Eutychus went to sleep and fell from a window three stories to the ground where he was pronounced dead. Paul came down and healed him declaring, *“Do not trouble yourself for his life is in him”* (Acts 20:9-10).
 - e. After a break to eat, Paul continued his teaching until daybreak (Acts 21:11).
 - 3.3. Miletus: Paul Bids Farewell to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:13-38)
 - a. Paul walked down to Assos and there joined his ship as it sailed south along the west coast of Asia Minor. The ship sailed past Ephesus without stopping. Paul wanted very much to get back to Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Pentecost. Apparently he judged that the goodbyes with all the Ephesian brethren would take too long (Acts 20:13-16).

- b. A few miles further, the ship docked at Miletus where Paul called the Ephesian elders to come meet with him. Then Paul addressed them in a final sorrow-filled exhortation (Acts 20:12-35).
- c. In this address, Paul saw fit to remind them of some things about himself and his conduct during his three-years among them:
 - He served the Lord with humility as he endured many *“tears and trials”* (v19)
 - He *“kept back nothing that was helpful”* (20). There fore he could say, *“I am innocent of the blood of all men for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”* (v27). He did this while teaching publicly and house to house (v20).
 - The expectation of great trouble when he returned to Jerusalem did not deter his service in the least. Instead his focus was on steadfast service to the end so that he could finish his race with joy – with a sure knowledge that he had pleased the Lord and would receive a heavenly reward (v24). Also, he was determined to faithfully complete the ministry that he had received from the Lord (v 24; also see Acts 26:15-19).
 - He had worked for a living with his own hands while among them. He motive was never whatever gain he could get from them (v33-34). He unselfishness in this regard should have been a reminder to them about the right use of their resources (v35).
- d. In his address, Paul refers to these leaders by three terms that focus on various aspects of their qualification and work.
 - He called them *“elders”* (v17) – a term that recognized their maturity and wisdom in the faith.
 - He called them *“overseers”* (v28). The underlying Greek work episkopos can be translated ‘bishop.’
 - He called them *“shepherds”* (v28). The related Greek word can also be translated ‘pastor.’
 - So clearly, in New Testament times the terms elder, bishop, and pastor all referred to the same position and not to multiple positions. Note that the same usage of these three terms appears in 1 Pet 5:1-2.
- e. Paul strongly exhorted the elders to protect the church (v28)
 - They were to protect no any and all churches but *“the church that is among you.”* No sponsoring church arrangement is acceptable nor is any situation in which a set of elders rule multiple and/or remote congregations.

- Diligent attention to their duties is appropriate because of the precious value of the church – it is the one that Jesus *“purchased with His own blood”* (v28).
 - Such diligence was also needful because false teachers would appear – some even from among the eldership – who would tear away some from the truth (v29-31).
- f. At the end of his words, *“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.”* (36-38)

3.4. Tyre: Paul Warned About Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-6)

- a. After some days the ship came to Tyre where it was to unload its cargo (Acts 21:3).
- b. While waiting from the ship to be unloaded, Paul discovered a congregation of Christians there. During his seven-day stay in Tyre, Paul no doubt had multiple opportunities to spend time with these brethren.
- c. Although acquainted only a short time, there was a strong common bond between Paul and the Christians of Tyre. When he went to re-board the ship, they all accompanied Paul and his companions – including the wives and children. Then Luke wrote, *“We knelt down on the shore and prayed”* (v5).
- d. After visiting with Christians at Ptolemais for one day, the ship ended its journey at Caesarea (v8) where Paul and his companions left the ship and went to stay with *“Philip, the evangelist, who was one of the seven”* (Acts 6:5). Luke also contributes the information that Phillip *“had four virgin daughters who prophesied”* (Acts 21:9).
- e. After *“many days”* a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea and prophesied of the danger awaiting Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11). As a result both Luke, the other traveling companions, and the Christians from Caesarea all urged Paul not to go on (Acts 21:12).
- f. *“So when he [Paul] would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, “The will of the Lord be done. And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem”* (Acts 21:14-15).

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Questions on Lesson Ten – Chapters 18:23 - 21:6
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2. The Third Missionary Journey Begins (Acts 18:23)

a. Where was Paul when he started his third missionary journey? _____

3. Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23)

e. What work did Paul do as he started his third journey? _____

4. Ephesus (Acts 18:24-20:1)

4.1. The Erroneous Teaching of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

a. List four good things Luke says about Apollo (a) _____
(b) _____ (c) _____ (d) _____

b. What was his limitation? _____

c. Can you see any connection between Acts 17:11 and this situation? Explain.

d. Why did Aquila and Pricilla take Apollos aside? _____

e. Were there any ill effects from Apollos' false teaching? Explain (Acts 19:1-6)

f. What did Apollos vigorously teach at Achaia and what proof did he use for his claims? _____

4.2. Disciples of John Were Baptized and Received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7)

a. Those Paul encountered at Ephesus were very limited in knowledge yet they were still described as _____ of Christ (v1).

b. But they were critically deficient in their discipleship in what way? _____

c. Does this passage indicate that all so-called baptisms are equally acceptable to God? _____. What does it indicate one should do if they find that their baptism was no the one commanded by the Lord for forgiveness of sins? _____

d. After they had addressed this deficiency, what did Paul do for them? _____

4.3. Paul Preaches in the School of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10)

a. How long did Paul teach in the synagogue at Ephesus? _____. How long did he teach from the School of Tyrannus? _____. Who heard the word of the Lord during Paul's work there? _____

4.4. Miracles Performed at Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20)

a. The Lord worked _____ miracles by the hand of Paul (v11). Give an example:

b. Some who attempted to cast out evil spirits ended up naked and wounded. How did that happen? _____

c. Can you measure repentance by its cost (v18-19) _____

d. Summarize the result of Paul's work at Ephesus (v10, 20) _____

4.5. Timothy and Erastus Sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:21-22)

a. After this missionary journey Paul planned to go to _____. Did this happen? _____. Did it happen as Paul expected? _____.

b. Who did Paul send ahead to Macedonia? _____

4.6. Demetrius Cause an Uproar at Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)

a. Who was Demetrius and what was his concern about Paul? _____

b. Was Demetrius involved in religious activities? _____. If so, what motivated him? _____

c. Who were Paul's traveling companions (v29) _____

d. What was the city clerk's concern? _____

5. **Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2)**

a. What did Paul do in Macedonia? _____

6. Greece (Acts 20:2-5)

- a. How long did Paul stay in Greece? _____

7. The Trip Home (Acts 20:3-21:6)

7.1. Macedonia: A Death Plot Causes a Route Change (Acts 20:3-5)

- a. Paul's original plan was to go home via what route? _____
His revised plan was to go via what route? _____
Why the change? _____

7.2. Troas: Eutychus Falls from Loft (Acts 20:6-12)

- a. Paul stayed at Troas ____ days and at Tyre ____ days (Acts 22:6, 21:4).
Why? _____
- b. What did the Christians at Troas customarily do on the first day of the week?

- c. How long did Paul preach to them? _____. What happened to interrupt his presentation? _____

7.3. Miletus: Paul Bids Farewell to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:13-38)

- a. When did Paul not stop in Ephesus of his way home? _____

- b. What terms were used to describe the position and work of the church leaders he met? (a) _____ (b) _____, and (c) _____ (v 17 and 28).
- c. Did Paul know what awaited him in Jerusalem? _____. How upset was he about the dangers he faced? (v22, 24) _____
- d. Paul wanted to finish his race with _____ (v24) so that he would then receive what? (2 Tim 4:6-8) _____
- e. What of Paul's words especially saddened his hearers (v25, 37-38) _____

- f. What danger did Paul warn these elders about? (v29-30) _____

g. What is the word of God capable of doing? (v32) _____

7.4. Tyre: Paul Warned About Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16)

a. Describe the scene as Paul left Tyre. _____

b. Who did Paul stay with in Caesarea? _____. Who was he? _____
_____. How many grandchildren did he have? _____ (v8-9).

c. What bad news did Agabus foretell in our last account of him? (Acts 11:28)
_____. This time? _____
_____ (Acts 21:10-11).

d. How does the character of Paul remind you of that of Jesus in verse 13?
_____ (Matt 23:21-23).

e. The same question regarding the character if the brethren verse 14?
_____ (Matt 26:42).