

18:24-21:16 - Paul's Third Missionary Journey (part 3)

According to 19:21, Paul has set his heart on going to Jerusalem. Some commentators see in Acts 20:1 to 21:16 a deliberate attempt by Luke to record Paul's final trip to Jerusalem in such a way that it parallels Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem. Whether this was Luke's intent or not, it is difficult to say; however, there are at least six events recorded in these chapters that parallel events in the life of Jesus recorded by Luke in his Gospel (See Stott, 315).

Jesus

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem with His disciples (Lk. 10:38)
 Jesus was opposed by hostile Jews (Lk. 9:22, 44; 18:31-32)
 Jesus predicted His suffering (Lk. 12:50; 22:19; 23:46)
 Jesus declared His readiness to lay down His life (Lk. 18:32)
 Jesus determined to finish His ministry (Lk. 12:50; 22:19; 23:46)
 Jesus expressed His abandonment to the will of God (Lk. 9:51)

Paul

Paul traveled to Jerusalem with his disciples (Acts 20:4ff.)
 Paul was opposed by hostile Jews (Acts 20:3, 19)
 Paul made or received predications of his suffering (Acts 20:22-23; 21:4, 11)
 Paul declared His readiness to lay down His life (Acts 20:24; 21:13)
 Paul determined to finish His ministry (Acts 20:24; 21:13)
 Paul expressed His abandonment to the will of God (Acts 21:14)

Although these details are not exact and need not be pressed, they leave the impression that Luke wanted his readers to see that Paul followed in his Master's footsteps. There is a correspondence between the life of the disciple and the life of the disciple's Master. The shape of the Christian life is shaped after the life of Christ.

Paul in Northern and Southern Greece to Miletus – Acts 20:1-6

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

20:2 When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece.

20:3 And 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 decided to return through Macedonia.

In 20:1–21:17 Luke gives the details of the last part of Paul's missionary journey as he traveled from place to place, finally reaching Jerusalem.

When the public uproar recorded in Acts Chapter 19 had ended, Paul sent for his disciples to come to him, and after encouraging them he said goodbye. He then headed for Macedonia (northern Greece), intending to catch up with Timothy and Erastus who had gone ahead of him (19:22).

In 20:2 it says that Paul went through the districts of Macedonia. We can be almost certain that he stopped at the churches that he had established on his second missionary journey, namely, the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. We can assume this for a couple of reasons: (1) There is no mention of going to the synagogues or doing evangelism. Instead, Luke tells us that Paul brought encouragement and comfort (exhortation – 20:2) to the people he met; this would almost surely be a reference to his

ministry among believers. (2) This was Paul's pattern; he repeatedly went back to the churches he had established to encourage them along in the faith.

Finally, he arrived in Greece (Achaia) which most believe to be Corinth. According to verse 3 he stayed there for about three months. Much had transpired since his first visit. While he was there he finalized arrangements for the Corinthians to share in financial aid to the Judean churches (1 Cor. 16:1-4; Acts 24:17), and it was there that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. In Romans 15 Paul said, "from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ (Ro. 15:19). . . But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you (Ro. 15:23) . . . I hope to visit you (Ro. 15:24). . . Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" (Ro. 15:25-26).

After about three months had passed, he decided to set sail for Syria, but when a plot was formed against him by the Jews he re-traced his steps and returned through Macedonia.

20:4 And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

20:5 But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.

20:6 We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

In verse 4 Luke interrupts his story to tell of seven of Paul's traveling companions who went ahead of him to Troas. Perhaps Luke lists these people to highlight the unity and diversity of the church. These traveling companions had come from all over the Roman Empire, but they were united in the gospel. Secondly, it shows the fruitfulness of Paul's missionary efforts. Derbe was reached during the first missionary journey, Berea and Thessalonica in the second, and Asia in the third. Wherever Paul went the Lord added to the church. Thirdly, it shows us the missionary mindedness of these new believers in the early church. The Christian church is a missionary church; the Christian faith is a missionary faith. Though these men had not been believers for long, they desired to reach beyond themselves and bring the gospel to a dying world.

A Week in Troas – Acts 20:7-12

20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

20:8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

20:9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.

20:10 But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him."

20:11 When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left.

20:12 They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.

From verse 6 Luke again begins to use the plural pronoun "we." For a time he had been separated from Paul, but they were now reunited, so Luke turned back to his personal eyewitness account of what had taken place.

Acts demonstrates that the early church met in houses. From the very beginning the apostles taught in the temple area and "from house to house" (Acts 5:42). In Acts 8:3 before Paul was converted it says, "Saul began to destroy the church. *Going from house to house.*" When Peter was delivered by an angel from prison, "he went to the house of Mary the mother of John. . . where many people had gathered and were praying" (Acts 12:12). In Acts 17:5 we read how the Thessalonians went to Jason's house in search of Paul. In Acts 20:20 Paul said, "I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and *from house to house.*" In this case, the believers were gathered in the top floor of a three-story house.

As Stott says, there were many lamps in the upstairs room where they were meeting, "so the atmosphere became stuffy and oily, even for Eutychus who was seated in the window, which, being unglazed, gave him some fresh air to breathe."

Eutychus was a young man (a word in Greek which could refer to someone between the ages of 8 and 14 years old) who was sitting in an open window listening to Paul. The late hour and the room conditions made him drowsy and he fell asleep. Falling from the window three stories down, he died on impact, a fact that could be verified by Luke, the doctor, who was there.

Paul responded by running downstairs throwing his arms around him and telling everyone that he was alive. This is not a statement that he was still alive in spite of the fall, but that he came to life as a result of Paul embracing him.

Then they all went upstairs and shared in communion and the fellowship supper which was evidently not served previously. Paul also resumed his sermon, and after talking until daylight he left.

From this story we can get a snapshot of how the early church worshipped.

To begin with, we note that they gathered on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is a reference to Sunday which was the common day for Christians to meet and worship (Mk. 16:2; Jn. 20:19, 26; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10) since it was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. In Luke 24:1-3 Luke writes, "*On the first day of the week*, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not

find the body of the Lord Jesus.” The day was chosen to celebrate Jesus’ victory over death. The meeting probably began Sunday evening around sunset since most had to work during the day.

Secondly, when they met together they listened to a sermon. Most likely, they followed the format of the synagogue that included prayer, a Scripture reading, singing, and a sermon. In this case, Paul addressed the church. Since he was planning on leaving the next day, time with the church was limited. Therefore, he ended up speaking from sunset to midnight (20:7) and then again after midnight to sunrise (20:11). It is interesting to note that when Luke describes Paul’s speaking, he uses the word *dialegomai* (διαλέγομαι) twice (20:7, 9); we derive the word “dialogue” from it. The other word used is *homileo* (ὁμιλέω - 20:11) from which we get the word homily which in Greek can simply mean conversation. Neither word means monologue.

Thirdly, the purpose of the meeting was to share communion together which Luke understood to take place in the context of a fellowship meal or “love feast” (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24; Stott, 319, 321; Bruce, 408; Bock, 619; Marshall, 345; Bruce, 409), following the pattern of the meal that Jesus had with His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem (Lk. 22:20; 24:30-35; Acts 2:42).

