

Survey of Biblical History – Part 1: Creation to Christ

#25 - THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:14 - AD 52-57)

Paul's third mission went back through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the churches (Acts 18:23).

1. Apollos in Ephesus and Achaia (Acts 18:24-28)

After Paul's previous departure from Ephesus, the Alexandrian Jew Apollos rose to prominence. He was a powerful teacher of the scriptures, having only a knowledge of John the Baptist. Aquila and Priscilla taught him more accurately. He was used greatly in Achaia refuting the Jews and strengthening the believers in Corinth and perhaps Athens as well.

2. Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41)

During Paul's second visit to Ephesus, he baptized the believers as they received the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul spent 3 months teaching in the synagogue to no avail. However, he spent the next 2 years teaching at the school of Tyrannus (probably a local philosopher). Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and left Ephesus to deal with further trouble there ("painful visit" of 2 Cor. 2:1). The trip was unsuccessful as many opposed him. He returned to Ephesus and then sent them the "severe letter" (2 Cor. 2:4). Meanwhile, Paul was performing miracles in Ephesus including many exorcisms. Several Jewish exorcists tried to follow in his footsteps. However, a demon-possessed man overpowered them and brought fear to the whole city. This led to a revival in which many people renounced their occultic practices and burning their books. This stirred up conflict with Demetrius, a prominent silver smith. He and others had lucrative businesses in making idols of the patron goddess of Ephesus, Diana (Artemis). A confused crowd assembled in the theater of the city. A riot was about to take place, but the city clerk wisely settled everyone down.

3. Paul's Return to Achaia, Macedonia and Troas (Acts 20:1-12)

The Diana incident gave Paul a reason to return to Corinth again. He went through Macedonia and met with Titus, receiving a good report of their repentant spirit (2 Cor. 2:12-13). He stopped at the churches along the way and likely wrote 2 Corinthians while in Philippi. He eventually came to Corinth, staying 3 months and reconciled with the church. However, the unbelieving Jews plotted against him and so he was compelled to leave. It was during his short stay in Corinth that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. There is no record of how the church in Rome began, but most likely those who were converted on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:10) returned and began the church. After leaving Corinth, Paul returned through Macedonia picking up companions in route to Asia Minor. After leaving Philippi, Paul came to Troas again. On a Sunday Paul preached a particularly long sermon and a man named Eutychus went asleep and fell out a window 3 stories to his death. Paul brought him back to life.

4. Paul's Journey back to Jerusalem (Acts 20:13-21:14)

Paul was anxious to get back to Jerusalem before the feast of Pentecost; however, he wanted to meet with the elders of the Ephesian church one last time. Paul and his companions lodged in Miletus and called for the elders to meet him there. Paul gave them last minute instructions, knowing he may never see them again (see Acts 20:22). Paul departed and eventually came to Tyre, staying with believers there who warned him not to go to Jerusalem. He then made his way to Phillip's house in Caesarea when a prophet named Agabus told Paul he would face trouble in Jerusalem. The believers pleaded with him not go, but Paul was prepared to be bound for Christ and to die if he had to. All agreed that this was God's will for the missionary Apostle.

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Paul's Perilous Journey to Rome (Acts 21:15-28:30 - AD 57-60)

1. Paul and the Elders at Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-26)

Paul meets with James (brother of Jesus) the pastor of the Jerusalem church and its elders (most of the apostles were detained elsewhere). He reports what happened on his latest mission. They inform Paul trouble is brewing due to his instructions to Jewish believers to forsake the Law of Moses. He agrees with the elders to show the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem that he has not forsaken Jewish customs, even though he did not regard them as necessary for salvation.

2. Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-23:23)

Asian Jews recognized Paul and raised an alarm. The city was thrown into an uproar and seized Paul to kill him. The Roman commander was informed and intervened. Paul persuaded him to allow him to speak to the mob. They calmed down when he spoke in Hebrew. He shared his Jewish background and credentials and his conversion to Christ. They listened with great interest until he noted God calling him to preach to the Gentiles. Riots broke out again and the commander tried to scourge him until Paul spoke of his Roman citizenship. The commander then summoned the Jewish leadership to ascertain what Paul had done. He spoke before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest Ananias, one of Jerusalem's most brutal leaders and very pro-Roman. He was assassinated by Jews at the outset of the Jewish revolt against Rome in AD 66. Paul mentioned that he was a Pharisee and that brought about a chaotic dispute between them and the Sadducees who were present. He was taken back to the barracks for protection (see Acts 23:11). A plot was uncovered to kill Paul, so the commander secretly sent him to Caesarea.

3. Paul's Roman Hearings (Acts 23:24-26:32)

A. Before Felix the Governor (Acts 23:24-24:27). Paul had a hearing before Felix, governor of Judea from AD 52-59. The Jewish leaders were summoned. An orator named Tertullus brought charges against Paul. Paul made his defense but was cut short. Felix was hoping vainly for a bribe from Paul. After his term was up, Felix left Paul imprisoned as a favor to the Jews.

B. Before Festus the Governor (Acts 25:1-12). A rehash to the hearing before Felix took place before the new governor, Festus. The Jews wanted to take Paul back to Jerusalem for a trial but intended to ambush him and have him murdered. Paul was suspicious of their move and so he made an appeal to Caesar, his right as a Roman citizen. Festus granted his request.

C. Before King Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32). Herod Agrippa II (ruler of territories NE of Palestine), whose son (Agrippa I) had James killed and Peter imprisoned, came to visit Festus and became interested in Paul's case. So Paul was allowed to recount his defense. He used the opportunity to try to persuade Agrippa to embrace the gospel. Both Festus and Agrippa agreed that Paul was innocent and if he had not appealed to Caesar, he might have been released.

4. Paul's Adventurous Voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:16)

Paul was delivered to a Roman centurion named Julius to transport him to Rome and before Caesar. The voyage began late in the travel season and encountered bad weather. They eventually came to the edge of Crete to a place called Fair Havens. Paul warned against going further, but no one listened. Shortly after leaving Crete the ship encountered a great storm, lasting several days. Paul was assured by an angel he would arrive safely before Caesar and so encouraged the dispirited crew. They shipwrecked on an island called Malta south of Sicily where Paul ministered to the people there. After 3 months they boarded another ship to the mainland of Italy and eventually to Rome. Paul was delivered to the captain of the Praetorian Guard (Caesar's bodyguard) and was allowed to dwell by himself with an attending soldier.