

Paul's Missionary Journeys Journey Three

Paul's Three Known Missionary Journeys plus a boat ride:

First AD 46-48 Acts 13 & 14

Second AD 49-52 Acts 15:40-18:22

Third AD 53-57 Acts 18:23-21:19

Paul's trip to Rome AD 59-60 Acts 21:17-28:31

When we left off at the end of Paul's second journey, he was again in Antioch of Syria. **Acts 18:22** **When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.** This is the same town from which he set out on his first journey as well. As he leaves for his third trip, he will also visit some of the same towns from both of his previous trips, but also go to some new places. In fact, mapping this trip looks very similar to his last journey except for the later part after retracing his steps to Ephesus. **Acts 18:23** **After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.**



Acts 18:24-28

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak 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 wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Throughout our studies of Paul's missionary journeys, we have relied on insights from both the Concordia Self-Study Bible and William Barclay's Daily Study Bible to help us understand the circumstances and backgrounds we've encountered. Of Apollos, Barclay writes, "He came from Alexandria. In Alexandria there were about one million Jews. ... Alexandria was a city of scholars. It was specially the place where scholars believed in the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament. They believed that not only were the events of the Old Testament events in history but that each of them had a hidden and an inner meaning. Just because of this Apollos would be exceedingly useful in convincing the Jews because he would be able to find Christ all over the Old Testament and to prove to them that the Old Testament looked forward all the time to the coming of Jesus."

So, we see that Apollos is a well-educated man with some good skills in communicating accurately who Jesus is, but we also learn from verse 25 that he's lacking something. **"he knew only the baptism of John."**

What was the focus of John's baptism?

We met Priscilla and Aquila at the beginning of chapter 18 as Paul arrived in Corinth on his second journey. **Acts 18:1-3 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.**

Paul also stayed with this couple while in Corinth but took them with him as he left. However, they didn't complete that journey with him. **Acts 18:18-19a After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and sisters and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. ¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there ...** Now we will see Paul returning to Ephesus and reuniting with this couple. Before he arrives though, they have encountered Apollos and worked to help fill him in on the Gospel more fully.

Barclay writes about what was lacking in Apollos' training. "He knew only the baptism of John. When we come to the next passage we shall see more clearly what that means. But we can say now that Apollos must have seen the need for repentance; he must have known the threat which was in John's message; he must have recognized Jesus as Messiah; but as yet he did not know the good news of Jesus as the

Saviour of men and of the coming of the Holy Spirit in power. He knew the task Jesus gave men to do but he did not yet fully know of the help Jesus gave men to do it. He knew of that great call to break with the past; but he did not yet know of that great power to live in the days to come. By the words of Aquila and Priscilla he was more fully instructed. And then Apollos, the man who knew Jesus as a figure in history, came to know Him as a living presence, and his power as a preacher must have been increased a hundredfold, for now to his knowledge he added power.”

Have you ever known someone like Apollos? Someone (maybe even yourself) who knew lots of information about Jesus and the Bible, but their life hadn't really been transformed by the Word. But then something happens, and everything changes for them.

What are some positive and negative reactions or outcomes when that happens?

The Concordia Self-Study Bible gives us more details on Apollos's travels around this time. “Apollos was introduced at Ephesus. In the absence of Paul; he moved to Corinth before Paul returned to Ephesus. But later Apollos came back to Ephesus during Paul's ministry there. (1 Corinthians 16:12)”

Before we go any further with Paul, let's learn more about the place where he'll be going, Ephesus. From Barclay, “(i) Ephesus was the market of Asia Minor. In those days trade followed the river valleys. Ephesus stood at the mouth of the Cayster and therefore she commanded the richest hinterland In Asia Minor. If we read Revelation 18:12 and 13 we will get a description of the trade of Ephesus. She was known as ‘The Treasure House of Asia,’ and someone called her, ‘The Vanity Fair of Asia Minor.’

(ii) She was an Assize Town. That is to say, at certain specified times the Roman governor came there and all great cases of justice were tried. She knew the pomp, the colour, the panoply and pageantry of Roman power and Roman justice.

(iii) She was the seat of the Pan-Ionian Games. The whole country came to these games. To be the president of these games, to be responsible for their organization and their running was a greatly coveted honour. The men who held this high office were called Asiarchs and are referred to in 19:31.

(iv) She was home of the criminals. The Temple of Diana possessed the right of asylum. That is to say, if any criminal could reach the area round the temple he was safe. Inevitably therefore, Ephesus had become the home of the cut-throats and the swindlers and the lawbreakers and the criminals of the ancient world.

(v) She was a centre of pagan superstition. She was famous for charms and spells called ‘Ephesian Letters.’ They were guaranteed to bring safety on a journey, to bring children to the childless, to bring success in love or any business enterprise. From all over the world people came to buy these magic parchments which they wore as amulets and charms.

(vi) The greatest glory of Ephesus was the Temple of Artemis. Artemis and Diana are one and the same person. Artemis is the Greek name, Diana, the Latin. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was 425 feet long by 220 feet wide by 60 feet high. There were 127 pillars, each of them the gift of a king. They were all of glittering Parian marble and 36 of them were marvelously gilt and inlaid. The great altar had been carved by Praxiteles, the greatest of all Greek sculptors. The image of Artemis was not beautiful. It was a black, squat, many-breasted figure, to signify fertility; it was so old that no one knew where it had come from or even of what material it was made. The story was that it had fallen from heaven. The greatest glory of Ephesus was that she was the guardian of the most famous pagan temple in the world.

It was in a city like that that Paul worked and won his triumphs for Christ.”

Acts 19:1-7 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³ And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.” ⁴ And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

In the Nicene Creed we “acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins” and yet in this passage we see a distinction regarding baptism. The Self-Study Bible offers this understanding of the difference regarding the baptism of repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus. Speaking of John's baptism, “It was preparatory and provisional, stressing man's sinfulness and thus creating a sense of need for the gospel. John's baptism looked forward to Jesus, who by his death would make possible the forgiveness of sins.”

Given what we've learned about Apollos, what can we conclude about why these people had a limited understanding of the gospel and baptism?

In what ways can preachers today potentially fail to give people a complete understanding of the gospel?

How can we guard against limiting our own understanding of God's word for us?

Paul spends some significant time in this community.

Acts 18:8-10 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Barclay: “When work in the Synagogue became impossible because of the embittered opposition Paul changed his quarters to the hall of a philosopher called Tyrannus. There is one Greek manuscript which adds a touch which sounds like the additional detail an eye-witness might bring. It says that Paul taught in that hall from the fifth to the tenth hour, that is, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Almost certainly that is when Paul did teach. Until 11 a.m. Tyrannus would need the hall himself, as he would after 4 p.m. In the Ionian cities all work stopped at 11 a.m. and did not begin again until the late afternoon. It was too oppressive to work then. We are told that there would actually be more people asleep in Ephesus at 1 p.m. than there would be at 1 a.m. What Paul must have done was to work all morning and all evening at his trade and teach in the midday hours. It shows us two things - the eagerness of Paul to teach and the eagerness of the Christians to learn. The only time they had was when others rested in the heat of the day and they seized that time. It may shame many of us when we talk of inconvenient times.”

Verse 10 speaks both of the duration of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, but also its reach to much of Asia. The Concordia Self-Study Bible reminds us of Paul's missionary strategy. "Many of the cities where Paul planted churches were strategic centers that, when evangelized, served as focal points from which the gospel radiated out to the surrounding areas. Other examples are Antioch in Pisidia, Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth."

As we think about being strategic in sharing the gospel today, we can also think in similar ways. We need to recognize where the strategic centers are today. In Paul's time communication was shared verbally and in written form, handwritten in fact. The technology of the printing press and mass production had not yet arrived. Things that were written could only be shared as they were transported physically from place to place. Sometimes by carrier on foot or riding on a donkey or horse, and sometimes by boat across bodies of water. The infrastructure needed to communicate included people to carry the messages either in writing or by mouth, roads or pathways to travel across land, and ships or boats with crews to navigate whatever body of water that separated people. As a result, those towns and cities located at the crossroads and ports were ideal for helping get the good news of Jesus to more people.

While today, we still communicate in some of the same ways using written and verbal messages, the pathways for getting messages to others has expanded dramatically. There are new and many more "crossroads and ports" available to each one of us now. So while the good news of the gospel hasn't changed, nor can it ever, the means for spreading that good news has definitely changed. The challenge for God's people may be multifaceted in this reality.

In what ways has the Church identified the new strategic crossroads and ports, and recognized the new pathways for communicating the gospel?

In what ways have the new means of communicating been embraced or resisted by the Church or Her people?

As you think about the nature of many of the cities where Paul established churches and how pagan and unholy many of them were, how does that influence your view of using the new strategic ports and pathways available to you in sharing the gospel?