

# Acts 18

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# Review of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1

- We believe that Paul wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Thessalonians between 50 -51 A.D.
- The need for the letter arose because Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica after preaching for between 3 to 6 months and before he completed his catechesis on the Second Coming
- Even though the Church in Thessalonica was coping with their persecutions and still thriving, the people were concerned about what would happen to those who died before Christ came for His Second Coming

# Review of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1

## (Cont)

- Paul told them not to worry that Jesus would raise those from the dead before he selected the living to accompany Him to heaven
- He described Christ's second coming like the *Parousia* of a king with trumpet blasts and much preparation for his arrival and after many signs
- This passage led to the misinterpretation by Protestant theologians about the Rapture and the Left Behind Series

# Review of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians

- A few months later Paul had to respond to a second problem that arose after the members of the Church in Thessalonica had received his first letter
- This time the confusion was over when Christ would come again
- Some believed that it was imminent so they stopped working and lived like parasites off the labors of the rest of the Church

# Review of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians (Cont)

- Paul reminded them that the Second Coming was not imminent and that there would be many signs before it happened
- That the exact time was not known as it would come like a thief in the night
- He counseled them not to support those who would not work

# Paul's Second Missionary Journey

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# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:18** *“At Cenchreae he cut his hair, for he had a vow.”*
  - Before sailing from *Corinth’s* port city of **Cenchreae** Paul got his hair cut because he had taken a vow
  - Although Luke does not make clear what kind of vow this is, most likely it was a **Nazirite vow**, which was a form of consecration to God for Israelite laypeople

# Numbers 6:1-21\*

- The Lord offered Moses the vow of a *Nazirite*
  - No cutting of their hair
  - No contact with anything related to the grape
    - This prohibition may have been because wine was perceived as a “joy” from the Lord



# Acts 18 (Cont)

- After completing the term of the vow a *Nazirite* would offer sacrifices in the Temple and shave their head
- Others who were Nazirite from birth included:
  - Samson (Judges 13:1-5)
  - John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)
- **Acts 18:22** implies that after arriving at *Caesarea*, Paul went up to the temple in Jerusalem

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:19-21** *“And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself went into the synagogue and argued with the Jews...he said, ‘I will return to you if God wills,’ and he set sail from Ephesus.”*
  - Paul arrived at *Ephesus* where he left his friends Priscilla and Aquila
  - They probably set up their tent making business and made preparations for his return mission which was similar to what they did for him at *Corinth*
  - Before he departs he enters the synagogue and engages in discussions with the Jews according to his usual pattern
  - His efforts must have been well received as they asked him to stay longer (His return will be discussed in **Acts 19**)

# Acts 18(Cont)

- **Acts 18:22** *“When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.”*
  - Paul sails for *Caesarea* in Palestine and travels up to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage to the Temple then down to the Church in *Antioch*
  - This marks **the end** of his **Second Missionary Journey** as he arrives back in *Antioch of Syria*
  - Place the **Roman numeral III** between **Acts 18:22** and **23**

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:23-24** *“After spending some time there he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.”*
  - This is **the beginning** of Paul’s **Third Missionary Journey**
  - Notice that Paul is once again going through the region (where, on his **First Missionary Journey**, he established the five churches in Galatia) strengthening all the disciples
  - The route for the beginning of his **Third Missionary Journey** is the same as that of his **Second Missionary Journey** on which he delivered the written decision from the **Council of Jerusalem**

# Paul's Third Missionary Journey

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# Acts 18 (Cont)

- This is critical information for us to know concerning the *Galatians* for these are the five churches of *Galatia*
- Most people do not think of this historical context when they read Paul's Epistles
- One must know to whom Paul wrote each letter and what was going on within those churches at the time
- This will be clear when we study the Letters to the *Galatians*

# Acts 18

- **Acts 18:24** “*Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.*”
  - Luke is telling us that he and Paul are now heading toward *Ephesus* in *Achaia*
  - Before they arrived a man named *Apollos* (of *Alexandria*) arrived at *Ephesus*
  - Although he was a believer in Christ, his only knowledge of baptism was from the baptism of repentance by John the Baptist
  - *Apollos* was a Jew and a native of *Alexandria* which was the capital of the Roman province of Egypt and one of the most influential cities in the Roman Empire

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:24-26** *“he was an eloquent man, well versed in the Scriptures.... He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they ...expanded to him the way of God more accurately And when he wished to cross to Achaia”*
- *Apollos* was also an authority on the scriptures and an eloquent (or learned) speaker
- Priscilla and Aquila who were the friends of Paul (whom we met in **Acts 18**) began to explain the faith as it applied to Jesus to *Apollos*
- *Apollos* then decided that he wanted to go to *Corinth*



# Acts 18 (Cont)

- At this time Greece consisted of *Macedonia* in the Northeast where *Philippi*, *Thessalonica* and *Beroea* were located, and *Achaia* in the South where *Corinth* was located
- *Apollos* planned to cross the *Aegean Sea* (the size of a small lake) by boat to *Corinth*

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:27a** *“And when he wished to cross to Aquila, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him.”*
  - Remember that the “disciples” and “brethren” were ways of referring to the believers
  - So *Priscilla and Aquila* wrote to the folks in the church at *Corinth* which Paul had established on his Second Missionary Journey
  - Why would *Apollos* want to go to *Corinth*?

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- Apollos was a rhetorician
- As we will find later there was a problem in *Corinth* because the Corinthians were famous for their schools of Philosophy and rhetoric
- They did not think that Paul was very eloquent or was knowledgeable of rhetoric or philosophy
- Paul's reason for using poor rhetoric was that he did not want the "Cross of Christ" to hinge on such things as rhetoric or philosophy (this will be explained when we look at Paul's letters to the Corinthians)

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:27b-28** *“When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.”*
  - So Apollos was encouraged to go to *Corinth* to explain the faith to the *Corinthians*, and to convey that Jesus was the *Christos* – King of Israel

# Transition

- Next we will look at **Acts 19**

# Acts 19

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# Acts 19

- **Acts 19:1-2** *“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to **Ephesus**. And he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’”*
  - At the end of **Acts 18** we saw that Paul had sailed from *Corinth* with a brief stop in *Ephesus*, then on to *Caesarea*, up to *Jerusalem* and then back down to *Antioch in Syria* ending his **Second Missionary Journey**
  - Paul began his **Third Missionary Journey** again moving through *Galatia* in route to *Ephesus*
  - Apollos left *Ephesus* and was now in *Corinth*

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- *Ephesus* was a city known for its involvement in magic and temples of the goddess Artemis
- Paul's teacher there also help set the stage for how the early Christians dealt with magical practices and contended with the fact that the Christian message was perceived to have political and economic repercussions, leading to hostility and even persecution
- Here Paul meets some disciples (Christian believers) and finds out that they are believers but something was wrong as they had no idea about the Holy Spirit
- Notice the association of baptism and the Holy Spirit



# Acts 19 (Cont)

- **Acts 19:2-7** *“And they said, ‘No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ They said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ 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.’”*
  - The disciples implied that Paul was asking a silly question because it was obvious that they had been baptized, but into the baptism of John the Baptist which was only a baptism of repentance
  - In the early Church there were two historical sacraments which were always done together
    - Baptism
    - Laying on of hands

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- St Cyprian called it the double sacrament, or the two stages of the one initiation process resulting in a person entering the Eucharistic community
- Thus, there was a threefold sacrament of initiation
  - Baptism
  - Laying on of hands
  - Eucharist
- This was what happened when Philip went to the Churches of Samaria and baptized the believers then the Apostles came later and laid their hands on them

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- Look at **Acts 8:14-17** *“they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”*
- This has caused some confusion in certain Protestant Pentecostal groups who started baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus
- But within the history of the Church the Trinitarian baptism has been going on according to the earliest documents all the way back to Matthew’s Gospel and the ***didache*** as far as 70 A.D.
- All historical baptismal records indicate that the Trinitarian formula was used i.e. “In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- Only in modern times has the other formula been used and it happened because they were not reading this text in its historical context
- Baptism in the name of Jesus was John's baptism versus the baptism initiated by Jesus
  - This only shows up in the Book of Acts

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- **Acts 19:5-9** *“On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; .... And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, ... but when some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of **the Way** before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus.”*
  - The way was one more way of speaking about the Faith or could be seen as a shorthand term for Christianity
  - Believers were those who followed “**the way**”
  - In addition to Acts, “**the way**” was mentioned in Mark’s gospel

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- Although there has been much debate about this term among scholars, it most likely came from the fact that Jesus talked about himself as “the way to the Father”
- Paul will say in **1 Timothy 2:5** that Jesus is the mediator between God and men
- Many think that Paul is using it here in a similar way as it was used in **Isaiah 40** where it says to prepare “the way of the Lord”
  - **Isaiah 40** is a reference back to the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian exile
  - It is like a new Exodus which presented the way Israel gained the Promised Land after escaping from Egypt
  - Some even see it referring back to the Garden of Eden
  - The RSV always addresses “the Way” with a capital “W”

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- Notice that the typical “Way” Paul operated was that he came to a city, found a synagogue, waited until the Sabbath, then preached the gospel to the Jews until he was kicked out of the synagogue after which he went to the market place and preached
- Jews first, then the Gentiles
- After being thrown out of the synagogue Paul went to the Gentiles in the *Hall of Tyrannus* until he got kicked out of *Ephesus* after two years

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- **Acts 19:10** *“This continued for **two years**, so that **all the residents of Asia** heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”*
  - Could this be a bit of hyperbole?
  - There is nothing wrong with a little bit of literary hyperbole and it should be perfectly obvious
  - This is being pointed out because there are a number of places where Luke used hyperbole but many people misread the passage and get into all sorts of problems



# Acts 19 (Cont)

- It was Paul's strategy to begin his missions in large cities and then use them as a base from which new converts could fan out and bring the gospel to surrounding areas
  - Look at the Seven Churches of Asia discussed in the letter to the Colossians and the Book of Revelation that existed by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century (Rev 1:4;11)

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- **Acts 19:11-12** *“And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that his handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.”*
  - We have seen this type of action throughout both the Old and New Testament
    - The woman who touched the garment of Jesus
    - The people lining the streets to hope that Peter’s shadow would pass over and heal them
    - The healing power of Elisha’s bones
    - The idea was that if one came in contact with something belonging to a holy person who had been in contact with God they could be healed
    - God was seen as the Divine Healer

# Acts 19 (Cont)

- So here again God is the one who heals this time through Paul
- This leads to the Church's understanding of relics
- At this point we need to pause and look at Paul's **Letter to the Galatians**