

VV STUDY NOTES: 30th September 2023

Andrew Gebbie

Paul & Ephesus: Acts 18: 18 – Acts 20:1

Places & People (Acts 18:18-28)

Cenchreae: was the port outlet for Corinth. There was a church there (Romans 16:1 identifies Phoebe as a deacon in the church)

Achaia: was the regional name for the whole area in which the Corinthian Churches were based.

Priscilla and Aquila: Unusually both Paul and Luke repeatedly indicate that Priscilla was probably the real missionary and Aquila's role was the financial provider for their mission. It has been suggested that Priscilla may have had personal family status and that freed her up for this role.

Apollos:(v: 24-28) Josephus records that John the Baptist had groups of disciples in the larger cities of the diaspora. Alexandria was the largest of these and was also the most important Jewish community outside of Judea. They had even translated the Jewish Scriptures into Greek, a process over time but climaxed in the Septuagint in the early 2nd Century BC. Paul constantly quoted from that translation.

Would this explain why he realized Jesus was the Messiah, but only knew of John's Baptism?

What does the role of APPOLOS teach us about the flexibility and openness of the early gentile church communities?

Paul's Jewishness

His first visit to Ephesus is of particular importance because it reveals the ongoing commitment he had to Judaism and his own personal Jewishness.

(v 19-21) Paul visits the Synagogue in Ephesus, speaks there, and is invited to spend more time with them, but refuses to stay.

Why would Paul of all people make that decision?

- Paul will defend to the utmost the privilege of Gentiles becoming Christians, without the burden of being expected to be burdened by Jewish Culture and the expectations of the Torah. The church leadership in Jerusalem accepted and promoted that view (Council of Jerusalem)
- At the same time the Jewish Christians still saw themselves as Jews, worshipped and prayed at the Temple, celebrated Jewish Festivals, practices circumcision and much more.

John the Baptist had taken the Nazarite vow (Nu 6: 1-27) which was often a lifetime commitment. There were shorter voluntary vows which were more limited, but often done to affirm a commitment to the service of God. Josephus records that the vows had to be ratified in the Temple with 30 days.

Both types of vows entailed shaving of their heads, paying of a tax to the Temple Treasury, and offering sacrifices to complete the process. There was a subsequent example of this, on the recommendation of the Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem (Ac 21:24).

*This would suggest that the Early Jewish Christians believed the Torah had importance and value, **but not as the way to salvation.*** Paul seems to have the same view. It is still the view of many Messianic Jews in our time. Yet these Messianic Jews are often denigrated by both fundamentalist Christians and radical Jews.

Have you seen evidence of this in your own experience?

18: 21-23: in 3 verses Luke covers the climax of Paul's 2ND missionary journey, his return to Antioch and the beginning of his 3RD missionary journey including additional support to the churches in Galatia & Phrygia. That's brevity in the extreme. He makes no further comment about the vow. In his mind it's obvious what Paul was doing!

Acts 19: 1 – 20: 1

Paul discovers believers who, like Apollos, needed to build on their understanding of the gospel. (v 1-7)

Is this a surprise in the context of the communications of the time?

Does it still happen?

Is re-baptism sometimes acceptable?

Was speaking in tongues necessary for salvation?

Paul's ministry in the Ephesus Synagogue. (v: 8-9)

Did Paul leave the Synagogue because:

1. They "refused to believe"?
2. Because they "publicly maligned the WAY"?

Point to note: throughout the NT the common description of believers was "followers of THE WAY"

The common view was that they were a part of Judaism! *Albeit a dangerous part!*

Ministry in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for 2 yrs. (v: 9-21)

The exact location is unknown, but it was a common practice in the Greek world for locations to be available for social, physical, and intellectual pursuits. Many of them had discussion and study times between 11 am and 4 pm, when the discussions took place in the heat of the day in cooler buildings.

• OUTCOMES OF THE MINISTRY

1. **v.10** "*all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.*"
Imagine accomplishing that in our day – the province of Asia was about the same size as England.
2. **## v 11-12** Did Paul encourage this third-party activity or was it simply the reaction of the people based on their background of sorcery?
3. **v. 13-16** This copycat approach, even by the sons of a Chief Priest produced bad outcomes.
What do you think of these events?
4. **v. 17 ##** would an event like this stimulate a similar response today?
5. **v. 18 Please Note:** The Scrolls were burned by BELIEVERS who had not let go of their practices of sorcery. This was not a mass burning of scrolls owned by others. It was a voluntary act of repentance. A drachma was the equivalent of a day's wages... they burned the equivalent of a year's wages for 137 people. This confirms that the number of believers in total must have been quite large since most of them would never have been wealthy enough to buy scrolls.
Is there a mandate here for burning the property of OTHERS?

• Paul begins to think of where he will go on leaving Ephesus.

Acts 19: 21-22

He plans to go to Jerusalem and visit Rome. Timothy and Erastus go to Macedonia and Achaia to prepare. The best laid schemes... Paul was familiar with God reorganizing the agenda.

• Acts 19:23- 20:1 (THE RIOT IN EPHEBUS)

What a difference a day makes!

What happens when sections of the community are under FINANCIAL PRESSURE?

These tradesmen and related traders were angry.

Is this scenario not regularly happening in our own times in varying contexts?

Were they correct in identifying the teachings of THE WAY as the prime reason for their problem?

v.32 is it a surprise that "Most of the people did not even know why they were there."?

v.33 Why would the Jewish leaders want to encourage and defend them?

v. 34 Why did it all go wrong when the crowd see Alexander and recognize him as a Jew?

The local believers and City Officials who were Paul's friends begged him: NOT TO GET INVOLVED.

- **ROMAN LAW TO THE RESCUE!**

- THE CITY CLERK**

- The province of Asia was the only province in the Roman Empire that never had a standing Roman Legion. Occasionally a Legion would be deployed on a temporary basis to assist with special problems. There were proconsuls who ruled as representatives of the people, and every city had officials to implement the proconsuls' instructions. All were accountable to Rome for the application of good governance and the maintenance of peace.

- There were legal systems in place that allowed grievances to be addressed. Rioting was considered as insurrection.

- In unstable provinces like Judea, and cities like Jerusalem, there were permanent legions that would respond to riots with ruthlessness. Sometimes that could cause thousands of deaths. The NT itself documents some of these.

- The City Clerk was a cool customer.**

- He gave them a reality check:

- 1. He commends them for their loyalty to Artemis but tells them to calm down!
 2. These people of THE WAY have not robbed temples!
 3. They have not blasphemed our goddess!
 4. If you have complaints, that's what the courts are for!
 5. **"We are in danger of being charged with rioting, because that is what happened today."**
 6. The whole province is in trouble if you don't STAND DOWN!

- **PAUL and his companions are FREE TO CONTINUE THEIR MISSION**

- ##** How many times in our story so far has ROMAN LAW saved Paul's life?