

Presentation 7—Acts 18-20

Paul's Third Missionary Journey



Paul's Third Missionary (Map: Public Domain)

- Acts 18.1-17—*Paul at Corinth*. Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla who, like Paul, are 'tentmakers'. Paul of lower social status, with mobility and financial support. Preaching is partly successful and Jewish adherents linked to the synagogue, though meets opposition. Paul reaffirms the Gentile mission (18.6).



Corinth and the remaining pillars of the 6th cent CE Temple to Apollo (© Michael Trainor)

- Luke Timothy Johnson comments on Paul's declarative turn to the Gentiles:

The formal and artificial character of these 'declarations of turning' by now should be obvious to the [auditor]. They serve to give structure to Luke's story, by making what must have been an extremely complex and never completely resolved tension, into one with a narrative logic and resolution.¹

- Acts 18.18-27---*Paul travels to Ephesus*. Paul journeys over several areas and many cities (including Caesarea and Antioch) with Priscilla and Aquilla before finally arriving at Ephesus.
 - A reflection on these journeys offers pause to consider Paul's precarious modes of travel, by foot and ship.

¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 326.



Ephesus: Curetes Street
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○ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor comments:

If Paul says that he was ‘in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure’ (2 Corinthians 11.27), it is obvious that on occasions he found himself far from human habitation at nightfall. He may have failed to reach shelter because of weather conditions; an unusually hot day may have sapped his endurance; mountain passes may have been blocked by unseasonably early or late snowfalls; spring floods may have made sections of the road impassable (he claims to have been ‘in danger from rivers’) (2 Corinthians 11.26).²

- Acts 19.2-20.6—*Paul in Ephesus*. Baptises and confirms 12 believers, with a Pentecost moment. Paul enters the synagogue. Paul preaches boldly and finds resistance from those who speak against the followers of the Way as evil. Paul is a miracle worker and attracts potential adherents, as the ‘Word

²Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, ‘Travelling Conditions in the First Century: On the Road and On the Sea with St. Paul,’ *Bible Review* 1 (1985), p. 41.

of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily' (19.20).

- Paul makes plans for his final journeys as Luke sets out the final stages of the narrative.
- Ephesus as a centre for Artemis (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world).
- Demetrius and the silversmiths fear that their income will be compromised by Paul's preaching (19.27). The uproar is quelled by the town clerk.
- Paul and entourage depart for Macedonia and Greece, finally arriving at Troas. As Luke uses 'we/us'.



Artemis cult statue, 2nd century CE.³

³ Selçuk Archaeological Museum near Ephesus, Turkey. Photo: Michael Trainor.

- Acts 20.7-16—*Paul at Troas*. Paul gathers, celebrates Eucharist, preaches a long time in a third storey upper room. Eutychus falls to his apparent death, but is resuscitated by Paul. Paul travels to Assos with an intention to travel to Jerusalem for Pentecost.



Reconstruction of Imperial Miletus, Pergamum Museum, Berlin

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- Acts 20.17-38--*Paul at Miletus speaks to the Ephesian Elders*. Farewell speech sums up Luke's ongoing pastoral care and encouragement for the audience of Acts in their present situation. Sad departure for Paul and the Elders as they bring him to the ship and Paul prepares for the next stage of his journey.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- Central to Paul's missionary agenda, as he travels around the Mediterranean, is to give encourage to Jesus followers. Who encourages you in your faith life? Where do you find encouragement and support?
- Reflection on the manner of Paul's travels, by foot or ship, reveals something of the difficulties that he faced in moving from place to place. What do you think are the difficulties today of Jesus followers and disciples?
- When Paul addresses the Elders of Ephesus at Miletus he encourages them and prepares them for their future challenges in pastoral leadership. What are the pastoral challenges for today's church and parish?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- The next session will focus on Acts 21-23. In preparation for this session, spend time with this section of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

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