

Acts 107

If God Wills

Acts 18:19-22

May 20, 2026

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Let us go ahead this evening and open up our Bibles to Acts 18:19.

Structure (Acts 1:8)

- Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)
- Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12)
- **Remotest part of the earth (Acts 13–28)**
 - 1st missionary journey (Acts 13–14)
 - Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-35)
 - **2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36 –18:22)**
 - 3rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:17)
 - Trip to Rome (Acts 21:18–28:31)



Tonight we are going to finish the second missionary journey, which is a great place to break. We are in that section of the Book of Acts where Jesus said to the disciples to go to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13-28). Part of that big section is the subsection we have been looking at of the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul. It started in Acts 15:36, and it is going to end right there in Acts 18:22, which we will finish today.

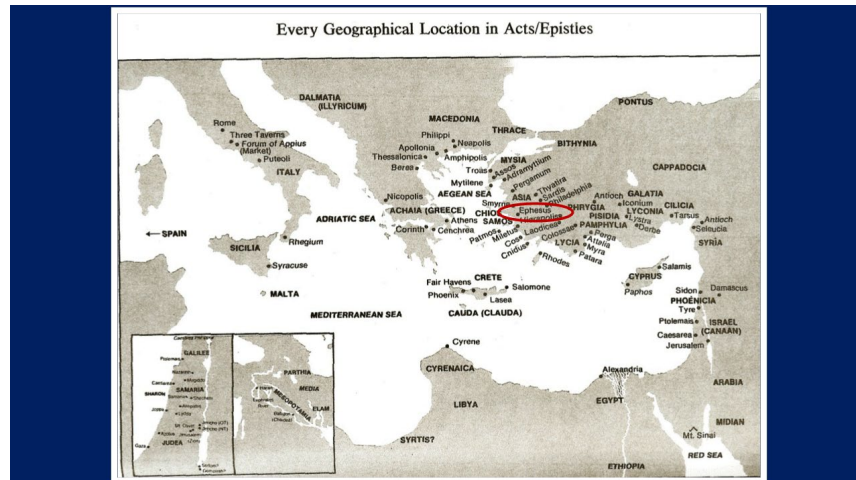
You have my personal guarantee that we will finish today. Even if we go till midnight, we will finish. That wouldn't be a bad thing. In the third missionary journey Paul is going to preach all night long in Troas, and someone is going to fall asleep and fall out of a window. That is what you get for falling asleep in church, right?

We have covered all that ground and we finished the Corinthian ministry last time. Now we have three verses on the Ephesus ministry, and then Paul's return to Antioch, where the three missionary journeys all start from. Paul leaves Corinth and he goes to Ephesus. You pick it up there at Acts 18:19, and it says, "*They came to Ephesus,...*"

Where is Ephesus? Ephesus is right here (see map below). I have been there. It is a tremendous area of archeological activity.

You want to keep your eye on Ephesus because that church is going to become the dominant church for most of the first century. In fact, about four books will be written to Ephesus. First, there is the Book of Ephesians, which is where it gets its name—Paul writing from Roman prison to the church at Ephesus about A.D. 60. Then there will be a

young man who will be trying to pastor that church—Lord help him. So Paul is going to write to him in 1 Timothy. His name is Timothy. Then Paul, in 2 Timothy, just before he dies, will tell this same young man pastoring the church at Ephesus to continue to persevere in his calling.



There is one more book written to the church at Ephesus: the Book of Revelation. Revelation has in it seven letters to seven churches. The first of those letters is Jesus speaking to the church at Ephesus, talking to them at the end of the first century, how they have left their first love and how their lampstand (and what a lampstand it was) for so many decades was about to be removed. We see that in the Book of Revelation.

ORDER OF PAUL'S LETTERS		
1.	Galatians	A.D. 49
2.	1–2 Thessalonians	A.D. 51
3.	1–2 Corinthians	A.D. 56
4.	Romans	A.D. 57
5.	Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians	A.D. 60–62
6.	1 Timothy, Titus	A.D. 62–66
7.	2 Timothy	A.D. 67

So Ephesus is a big deal. What do we know about the City of Ephesus? Arnold Fruchtenbaum says,

"At the time of Paul, 'it was the greatest commercial city of Asia Minor,' with a population of about 250,000, making it probably the fourth largest city of the Roman Empire after Rome, Alexandria in Egypt, and Antioch of

Syria. Throughout Roman history, Ephesus was known as 'the Gateway to Asia' because it was a port city."¹

These were the places where Paul went. He went to population magnets because he was trying to reach the most people.

Here is some more information on the city of Ephesus. Once you see this background, the things that Paul brings up in the Book of Ephesians start to make sense.

"It was the center of sorcery and the practice of the black arts. The city was also known as 'the Warden of the Temple of Artemis,' which will play a role in Acts 19. Artemis, also known as Diana,..."²

The Romans, you remember, when they took over through Greece, did not get rid of the idols—they just renamed them. So Rome conquered Greece politically, but Greece conquered Rome culturally.

"Artemis, also known as Diana, was the multi-breasted goddess of fertility and hunting."³

That is why Paul, in Ephesians, says, "Do not be involved with sexual immorality."

"The Artemision, or temple to Artemis, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Built on a plain between the hills of Ayasoluk (Selçuk) and Pion, it was destroyed at least three times. The last version is said to have contained 127 columns, four to six feet in diameter and 60 feet high. The temple was 425 feet in length and 225 feet wide, making it nearly double the size of the Parthenon in Athens."⁴

We have already read about Paul's ministry in Athens earlier back in Acts 17.

"It became the center of pagan worship, with sacrifices and religious prostitution. According to the historian Strabo (64/63 B.C.-ca. A.D. 24), the Artemision also served as a refuge for fugitives from justice and as a bank for treasures."⁵

¹ Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 385.

² Ibid., 386.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

That helps us understand Ephesians 1:3 where Paul says that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He said that to a city that emphasized materialism and things of that nature.

So Paul arrives in Ephesus. When you keep reading there in Acts 18:19, it says,

"They came to Ephesus, and he left them there...." (Acts 18:19).

Now who are *"they"*? They are Priscilla and Aquila. They got involved with Paul's ministry back in Acts 18:18 at the end of the Corinthian ministry. Paul brought them with him as he was moving and continuing into Ephesus. Then he left Priscilla and Aquila behind in Ephesus, and that is going to be a big deal.

There is information about Ephesus on the third missionary journey. It is in Acts 18:24-28. There is a man there named Apollos, who is mighty in the Scriptures and is vigorously contending with the unbelieving Jews. Here is a guy that, as I think I analogized it to you last week, is like Michael Jordan playing with just his left hand. Michael Jordan is great with his left hand, as was Larry Bird. Bird played a whole quarter or a whole half or something like that with just his left hand, and told the team that he was going to do that ahead of time, and did it. But can you imagine Larry Bird and Michael Jordan with both hands?

That is how to understand Apollos. He is like a Michael Jordan with just his left hand because he only understands Christ up to the point of John the Baptist. He does not have, as Paul Harvey used to say, "the rest of the story." So he did not understand. The only thing Apollos understood was John the Baptist pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). That is all he knew, because he was a disciple of John the Baptist.

Then Apollos apparently left Israel, so he did not know anything about the crucifixion. He did not know anything about the resurrection of Jesus. He did not know anything about the ascension of Jesus. He did not know anything about the birth of the church in Acts 2. So Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife team, in Acts 18:24-28, are going to take Apollos aside and give him the full council of God's Word. If Apollos was such a good debater with just his left hand, think what he could do with both hands. That is the significance of Priscilla and Aquila being left behind in Ephesus. They are about to have this huge ministry with Apollos.

You might have some kind of ministry like that, where maybe you are not in front of an audience of people or on a platform, but you have a discipling type of influence where you have a huge impact on somebody who will have a large platform. The two of them—husband and wife, Priscilla, the wife, and Aquila, the husband—taught Apollos the Word of God.

This shows you that women can teach. There is Priscilla along with her husband, teaching. I understand that women are not to be preachers behind a pulpit, or elders in a church, or pastors, and all of that. I am with you on that. But sometimes we are very aggressive promoting that, and we give women the idea that they cannot teach at all. Yet women can teach. Here Priscilla is alongside her husband, teaching Apollos. Women can also teach children. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul writes to Timothy,

"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice,..." (2 Timothy 1:5).

Paul would write to Timothy in that same book: *"and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings..." (2 Timothy 3:15)*. The word *"childhood"* there, I believe, is *"brephos"* (βρέφος) in the Greek, which means *"from infancy."* It is the same word used to describe the baby Jesus in the manger (*"brephos"* [βρέφος]).

How did Timothy learn the Scriptures from infancy? Who taught him the Scriptures? Earlier in the book it says *"your grandmother Lois,"* who happened to be a woman, and *"your mother Eunice,"* who happened to be a woman, taught Timothy the Scriptures. Can women have a ministry of teaching? Yes. You have Priscilla teaching Apollos alongside her husband, in more of a one-on-one type of setting. That is really not what we would call congregational authority. You have Timothy being taught the Scriptures from infancy. So women can teach youth.

What does Titus say?

"Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children," (Titus 2:3-4).

Here is an example of older women teaching younger women. There are a lot of examples in the Bible of women teaching. In fact, it was the women who were the first proclaimers of the resurrected Christ when Christ rose from the dead. In this whole debate about women pastors and all of that, let us be conservative in our approach, and let us be biblical, but let us not overstate the case and make it sound as though women can have no teaching ministry in the church, because that is going too far in the other direction.

So Paul leaves Priscilla and Aquila behind, and they are going to have a big influence in this city of Ephesus on this young man Apollos. Where does Paul go when he leaves them behind? Once he is in Ephesus he starts his synagogue ministry, which is what Paul always does. He always goes to the synagogue first in a new city. Acts 18:19 says,

"They came to Ephesus, and he left them [Priscilla and Aquila] there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews" (Acts 18:19).

This is what Paul did in Thessalonica. Acts 17 says,

"Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ'" (Acts 17:1-3).

This is what Paul always does. He goes to the synagogue first and uses Hebrew Bible to try to convince the Jews gathered in the synagogue that Jesus is the Christ. He does the same thing in Berea in Acts 17:10:

"The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17:10).

This is something that Paul will articulate later in Romans 1:16, where he says,

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

When you read Acts 18:6 in Corinth, where the Jews resisted Paul in the synagogue, it says,

"But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'" (Acts 18:6).

It is not a statement there that his ministry practice was no longer to go to the Jews first. This is a statement of what would happen in Corinth. It is not a game-changer in Paul's overall approach in a different city. When he gets into the next city he does not bypass the synagogue, but he goes to the synagogue. It is just that in Corinth that they did not want him, so he says, "Your guilt is on your own head!" He is not announcing a curse on them. He is saying, "You have heard the truth and you do not want to receive it. So now I am going to the Gentiles." That is a local change. It is not a dispensational change, or else when Paul went to Ephesus after Corinth, he would have bypassed the synagogue, which he did not do.

Now, this synagogue in Ephesus is different because they want him to stick around, which is rare. Most of the time they are kicking him out. Look at Acts 18:20:

"When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent" (Acts 18:20).

That is unusual. "Paul, stick around and explain Hebrew Bible to us a little better and show how it points to Yeshua." Interestingly, Paul turns down the invitation. You would think he would stick around since he finally got some openness on their part, but he does not. He declines the invitation.

"When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent" (Acts 18:20).

The first time you read that and you say to yourself, "That is unloving. Why didn't he stick around?" The answer is that the Holy Spirit knows things that human beings do not know. The Holy Spirit knows what is going to happen on the third missionary journey, which is in the next chapter, where Paul is going to retrace a lot of his steps and go right back to Ephesus, and he is going to be there for three years. That is where he has some of his most fruitful ministry.

He is going to start teaching in a school called the school of Tyrannus, and he is going to use the lecture method to communicate. People say the lecture method does not work. I once heard a lecture by a professor telling us that the lecture method does not work. So I am thinking, "If it is such a bad method, why are you lecturing us on not using the lecture method?" The lecture method does work in certain circumstances, and Paul is going to be in that school of Tyrannus for two of the three years in Ephesus. This is what it says:

"This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10).

It is in this ministry in Ephesus on missionary journey number three that all of these churches that you read about in the Book of Revelation—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea (and we can mention all kinds of other churches in this region, like Colossae [to which Paul wrote the Book of Colossians])—you might wonder how all of these churches come into existence. The answer is what Paul did in Ephesus on his third missionary journey using the lecture method in the school of Tyrannus for two years. Acts 19:10 says that *"all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord."*

When you understand that, you understand that Paul's leaving Ephesus on the second missionary journey is not uncompassionate. The first time you read that: they want him to stay and he says, "No," and he leaves—before we ascribe bad motives to Paul, remember that the Holy Spirit knows things. He knows that Paul is going to recycle back

through that area, and all of these people are going to have an opportunity to believe, and they believe in droves. That is how all these churches in Asia got their start.

It is very similar to Acts 16:6-7, earlier on this second missionary journey. You might remember this:

"They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;" (Acts 16:6).

Here is Paul moving on his second missionary journey, and he is going to keep moving to a place called Troas, where he is going to get that vision of the Macedonian man saying, "Come over to help us." As he is moving, the Holy Spirit says, "You will not preach the gospel in Asia."

Then you read in Acts 16:7,

"and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;" (Acts 16:7).

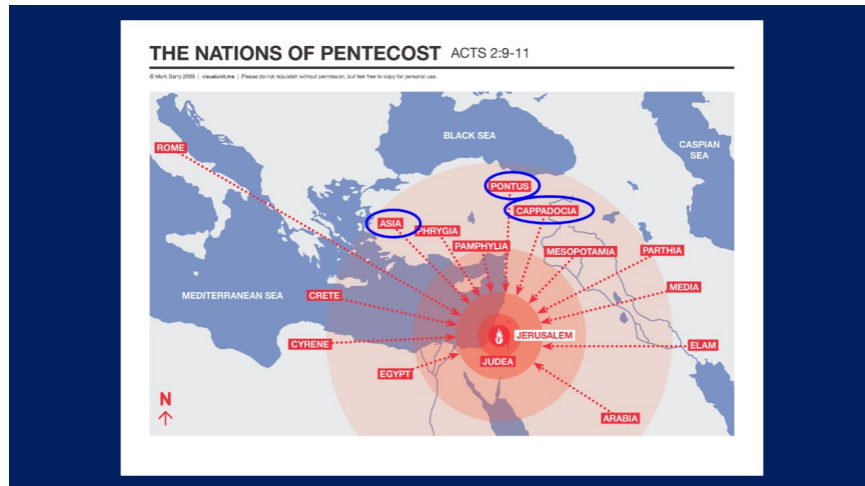
So as he is traveling, the Spirit says, "You will not preach the gospel in Asia, and you will not preach the gospel up here in Bithynia." You read that and you say, "Jesus does not love people. Why did He exclude those groups?" The answer is that the Holy Spirit knows things that human beings do not know. The Holy Spirit knows that Acts 19:10 is coming, when all those in Asia will hear the word of the Lord. It just was not time yet.

The Holy Spirit also knows that, concerning Bithynia and Pontus, what we would call northern Turkey, there were people from those regions that traveled to Jerusalem to participate in the day of Feast of Pentecost from those areas. They happened to hear Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost when about 3,000 were saved.

Acts 2:9-11 says that there were people there from Asia, Pontus, and Cappadocia. Then when the Day of Pentecost was over, they went home. They got saved, and they went home, and they started churches. That is why the Holy Spirit said, "Do not go up into northern Turkey," because the Holy Spirit knows things that human beings do not know. "The gospel is already traveling up there. Go into Macedonia, go into Europe, where they have never heard the gospel before."

What is happening here in Acts 18:20? Paul did not consent to stay in Ephesus. It is the same thing that happened in Acts 16:6-7.

Here is where Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia are. Those folks already had the gospel.



In fact, Peter is going to write to them in 1 Peter:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen" (1 Peter 1:1).

That is why the Holy Spirit said, "Keep moving." We sometimes accuse God of things that we really do not even know what we are talking about. "He is being unloving. He is leaving unreached people groups." No, He is not. He just knows who has the gospel, who is going to get the gospel, and who needs it now.

Why would Luke include this information? It is to present Theophilus with an orderly account of the birth and growth of the church, so as to affirm him in what he has believed. The point of the Book of Acts is the birth and growth of the church numerically, geographically, and ethnically. This is an example of geographical progress. That is why all these places of geography are given.

Then you get to Acts 18:21. Before Paul leaves Ephesus, he makes a promise. After he declines the invitation, he says,

"but taking leave of them and saying, 'I will return to you again if God wills, '..." (Acts 18:21).

"You Jews in the synagogue in Ephesus, I will return to you again if God wills." When I post these teachings I want a title, so I titled this "If God Wills," because that is a pretty good way to live. Paul did not say, "I am coming back, definitely." He says, "I want to come back, but God has to open the door."

Remember James 4:13-17, written by James, the Lord's half-brother. Remember what he says to the wealthy business people. He says,

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.' But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:13-17).

James is saying that it is just arrogance and it is sin to say, "Next year at this time, I am going to be doing this," or "I am going to be doing that," or "I am going to be going here," or "I am going to be going there," when the reality is that you do not even know if you are going to be alive tomorrow. How many people do we know just in this flock since I have been here, since 2010, that were here and active and involved and making plans, and then the Lord took them home. That could happen to any of us. Here today, gone tomorrow.

So what we ought to say is, "I have a leaning towards doing this. I have a desire towards doing this. But whether it actually happens or not, Lord, You are going to have to give the okay." We live this life and we act like it is all going to last forever. Everybody in the hospital who is dying cannot believe it's happening to them. But the truth of the matter is, the last time I checked, the mortality rate is still one hundred percent, if we are not the Rapture generation. I hope we are, but I cannot promise it. The truth of the matter is, every single one of us will die.

*"Do not boast about tomorrow,
For you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).*

This is an Old Testament and a New Testament concept. Paul, all of the time, wanted to do this or that, but do you know who stood in his way? The devil. The devil stopped him many times. In 1 Thessalonians 2:18, Paul would speak to the Thessalonians and he would say,

"For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

"I want to make it back to Ephesus and I will make it back if the Lord wills." That becomes a very good role model in terms of how we should approach life.

But do you know what? I guess it was God's will, because Paul made it back. He had a tremendous ministry there for three years on the third missionary journey. He taught in the school of Tyrannus for two years using the lecture method. All of those churches that we read about in the Book of Revelation got their start at that point. Faithfulness is our part; the results are God's. It is such a relief to live life that way. "You mean, Lord, I

am not responsible for the success or failure of the enterprise?" "No, you just do what I tell you to do, and the results are Mine."

In the Parable of the Talents, it is, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He does not say, "Well done, good and successful servant." I used to think it said, "Well done, good and successful servant," but it does not say that. It says, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Just do your part and then trust the results to the Lord.

"If the Lord wills, this will happen, or that will happen," or "I will graduate from that school," or "I will work at this job," or "I will make that kind of wage," or "I will retire at that age." But do not have your script so nailed down that God cannot creatively interrupt it. I had a youth pastor that said, "If you want to make God laugh, show Him your plans for your life." That will give God a real chuckle, because God can interrupt our lives any time He wants to, and it is for the better. We could be absent from the body and present with the Lord at any moment. We are like mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (James 4:14).

As we had the graduation for the youth this last weekend, I had a chance to pray at the end and I prayed James 4:14. I just prayed, "Help these kids to understand that they are like mist. It is like the mist that comes off your coffee and it is gone. Help these kids understand that they are going to blink and forty years are going to pass just like that." They have no idea, but that is what is going to happen.

I know it is going to happen because it happened to me. I can remember forty years ago when I was in their position, graduating from high school, like it was yesterday. I blinked and forty years of my life were gone. I was thinking about if I live for the next forty years, the words, "If they make it to my age, I will be a hundred years old." I am thinking, "Lord, I do not know if I want to be here at the age of one hundred." If the Lord lets me live, I will be turning sixty in September. I probably will not even be here over the course of the next forty years. So if the last forty years passed by quickly, what do you think is going to happen in the next forty years, if you even get them? That is a good way to live. It takes the pressure off, too.

Paul departs (Acts 18:20): *"he did not consent."* Then, in Acts 18:21, he says,

"but taking leave and saying, 'I will return to you again if God wills,' he set sail from Ephesus" (Acts 18:21).

Now Paul is departing from Ephesus, although he is going to come back to Ephesus. He leaves Priscilla and Aquila behind. Now you are seeing the seeds going into the ground for the well-known church of Ephesus, which will become the most dominant church in the first century. The church started here in Jerusalem. It moved up to Antioch in the north, and eventually the thrust of Christianity will move westward to Ephesus. There is a northwestern trajectory that Luke is tracing for us.

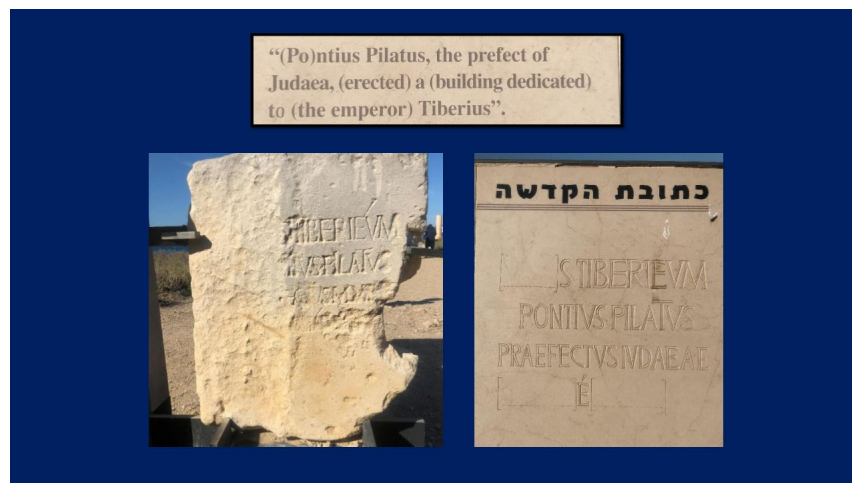
With that brief Ephesus ministry in Paul's rearview mirror, now he returns to Syrian Antioch to wrap up his third missionary journey. You see that there in Acts 18:22 when he lands in Caesarea. It says,

"When he had landed in Caesarea,..." (Acts 18:22).

Where is Caesarea? Caesarea is right here. It is a beautiful beach town, as is Ephesus. When you are in Ephesus or Caesarea—I have been to both places—and you are looking at that beautiful Aegean Sea in the case of Ephesus, or the Mediterranean Sea in the case of Caesarea, you are just saying, "Praise the Lord. Thank You, Lord, for letting me see this beautiful ocean—beautiful water."

Caesarea has a history. You will remember in Acts 10:11 where a man named Cornelius was brought to Christ. He was the first full-fledged Gentile that got saved with his entourage in the Church Age. This is such a big deal. The whole church is Jewish, and this Gentile gets saved with his family.

The mothership does not believe it happened, so Peter, in Acts 10, after leading Cornelius to Christ, has to travel all the way back to Jerusalem, where the apostles were for the first Jerusalem Council to explain to them, "Yes, a Gentile really got saved. Can you believe it?" Then he says, "What happened to Cornelius, in terms of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, was exactly what happened to us Jews who got saved at the beginning. I remembered the words of the Lord, 'You will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' What happened to Cornelius happened to us." Those are the things we have studied in the Book of Acts.



Caesarea has quite a history. When you go to Caesarea, you will run into this key piece of archeological evidence. It says this: "Pontius Pilate, the prefect of Judea, (erected) a (building dedicated) to (the emperor) Tiberius."

That piece of archeology was discovered in Caesarea. For the longest time people have said that the Bible is a myth, or that there is no evidence that Pontius Pilate ever existed. Give history and give archeology enough time, and it will validate what the Bible indicates. When you travel to Israel and you go to Caesarea (and most trips will take you there), you will run into this piece of archeology.

Paul comes to Caesarea, and then what does he do?

"When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch" (Acts 18:22).

This was not just a church, but 'the church.' What church would that be? The Jerusalem church, which is very close to Caesarea, as you can see. It does not say 'the Jerusalem Church,' but every commentator says it is an obvious reference to the Jerusalem Church because it is described as 'the church.' It is called 'the church' because that is where everything started, even before Antioch came into existence it was the Jerusalem church.

Most of the apostles that were still alive were there, although many had fled from Jerusalem because of the persecution brought on by Saul of Tarsus. What did Paul do at this church? He had a missions moment like we have. I would think that he got in front of these people and told them what happened on the second missionary journey, which is exactly what he did in Acts 14:27, about the first missionary journey.

You will notice that Paul was not a lone ranger. He was not a lone ranger for Christ. He was always reporting back to the mothership. In the Book of Galatians, even when he had a personal vision from God, what did he do with that personal vision? He did not become a lone ranger. What he did was he submitted himself to the apostles in Jerusalem just to make sure that his doctrine was consistent with theirs. That is in Galatians 1:18:

"Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas [that is the Aramaic name for Peter], and stayed with him fifteen days" (Galatians 1:18).

Never in Paul's ministry is he trying to drive some kind of wedge between his ministry activities and where Christianity started. He is always consistent with his ministry activities and where God started everything in Jerusalem. That is the heart of a true missionary. A true missionary is not off doing their own thing—a lone ranger. They are always consistent with the church that sent them.

Paul had great respect for the saints in Jerusalem. In fact, through much of the New Testament, he is raising up an offering for them because they had a famine there and they were suffering. This is what we read in Romans 15:25-27:

"but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things" (Romans 15:25-27).

All of these Gentiles that are being saved in Paul's ministry understand that if God hadn't started a work in Jerusalem, then these missionary activities and everything we read about would not even be possible. So when the Jerusalem-ship, mothership, as I call it, started to suffer because of a famine that Agabus spoke of in Acts 11, all of these Gentiles that were saved said, "Let us send them money."

They were pleased to send the Jerusalem church money because they understood that they had benefited spiritually from what happened in Jerusalem. Their thinking was, "If we have benefited spiritually—we have received Christ from what God originally started in Jerusalem—then we owe them financial help. They sowed into our lives spiritual things. So here is our opportunity to sow into their lives material things." Paul always respected the leadership in Jerusalem.

What does it mean when it says that Paul went up to Jerusalem? It says: *"When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church,..." (Acts 18:22)*. Why does Luke say that? Because Jerusalem is always up—always. When you are leaving Jerusalem, you are coming down. It shows you that whoever wrote this (Luke, we believe), understood the geography of the time period that he was talking about.

When you go to Israel it is obvious why the Bible keeps saying that they went up and they went down. Jerusalem is elevated. There are some Psalms in your Bible called the Psalms of Ascent. If someone were to ask you, "Where are the Psalms of Ascent?" what would you say? They are Psalm 120 through Psalm 134. You say, "What are those doing there?" These are psalms that the Jews sang, or chanted, as they went upward to Jerusalem to celebrate the various feasts.

Leviticus 23 tells the Jews to show up (in a few cases it is mandatory) at the central sanctuary, which eventually became Jerusalem, to celebrate the various feasts. The Jews would travel to Jerusalem, and on their way up they would sing these psalms called the Psalms of Ascent. These are recorded in your Bible, Psalm 120 through Psalm 134.

Jesus Himself sang those psalms, because, as is recorded in John's gospel, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate these various feasts five times that we know of. He went up to celebrate Passover (John 2:23); an unnamed feast (John 5:1); He went up to Jerusalem to celebrate Tabernacles (John 7:2); and He went up to celebrate Hanukkah (John 10:22).

Hanukkah was added to these feasts later, celebrating the Jews and their liberation of the temple from the Seleucid Antiochus in the intertestamental period. It is sometimes called the Feast of Dedication, sometimes called the Feast of Lights, and it is celebrated parallel with our celebration of Christmas. There is nothing more beautiful than being in Jerusalem and seeing the whole place lit up with lights and candles that people are carrying. That is Dedication. That is something Jesus celebrated.

Then there is another example of Jesus going up to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (John 13:1). So there is no doubt in my mind that Jesus knew these Psalms of Ascent very well, and sang them with regularity. If you are on a really good Israel tour, when the bus driver puts it in a certain gear to go up to Jerusalem, he will give you some kind of teaching on the Psalms of Ascent, even having the chance to sing some of those as you are traveling upward to Jerusalem.

Christ's Five Trips to Jerusalem		
Feast	Verse	
Passover	2:23	
Unnamed	5:1	
Tabernacles	7:2	
Dedication	10:22	
Passover	13:1	

That is why Acts keeps talking about how Paul "went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem." Paul likely gave the Jerusalem church some kind of report on what had happened on missionary journey two, but he does not stop there. Now he goes up north to Antioch, which is essentially where he started.

Where is Antioch? It is up here. That is where the three missionary journeys began. Here Paul is in Caesarea, then he goes to Jerusalem, and then he moves upward from Jerusalem to the tip of the nation of Israel to Antioch of Syria (not to be confused with Pisidian Antioch, outside the land of Israel). We are talking about Syrian Antioch.

It is like the name "Duluth." I have been to Duluth many times. There are about forty cities in America named Duluth. Did you know that? So that is a common occurrence in the ancient world, and even today it was the same way. There were two Bethlehems. There was a Bethlehem up in Galilee and then there was another Bethlehem probably about two miles or so from Jerusalem. It is the same with this city, Antioch.

So what happened in Antioch? We see it there in Acts 18:22:

"When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down—" (Acts 18:22).

When you are going to Jerusalem, you are going up (Psalms of Ascent), and when you are leaving Jerusalem, you are going down. It is just a little detail, but it shows you that the person—Luke—who wrote this knew what he was talking about. The liberals will try to tell you that somebody who lived long after the fact wrote this Book of Acts. I do not think so. The person that wrote it has a lot of knowledge of Greco-Roman topography, history, the time period, etc.

So Paul went to Antioch. Why is Antioch significant? Because Antioch is the sending church. All the missionary journeys launch from Antioch—first missionary journey, second missionary journey (which we just finished), and then the third missionary journey. What did Paul do at Antioch? Probably the same thing he did at Jerusalem. He gave his missionary report, because they were the ones that sent him.

This is the same thing Paul did with Antioch when he finished the first missionary journey. Acts 14 says,

"When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

When we were in Acts 14:27, I think I made mention of the fact that this report—"reported all things"—meant that he told a long story. We give our missionaries five minutes, but Paul told a long story. If you give the missionaries more than five minutes, it is going to eat into the preaching ministry—I guess that is our thought process. But it is interesting to me that Paul was not limited by time. I do not know if it was a church service—maybe it was just a meeting with the elders or whatever—but he told a long story. He told them what happened on the first missionary journey and how all these Gentiles were getting saved in southern Galatia.

On the second missionary journey, when Paul got back, I am assuming he did the exact same thing. In fact, if you look at Acts 18:23, it says, *"And having spent some time there..."* I am assuming that part of that was reporting to them everything that happened on missionary journey two just like he had earlier reported on everything that happened on missionary journey number one.

When Paul moves off now on missionary journey number three and leaves Antioch (Acts 18:23-21:17), it is his third missionary journey. Acts 18:23 begins the third missionary journey:

"And having spent some time there, he left and passed successfully through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23).

What it says in Acts 18:23, "*he left*," that is literally what it means. Paul would never go back to Antioch. This was his last time in Antioch—this church that loved him, this church that supported him, this church that prayed for him, this church that launched the three missionary journeys. When he goes off on his third missionary journey, he will never see that church or these people again. It is, I guess, a happy thing in one sense, but a sad thing in another. And that ends his second missionary journey.

Tonight we have covered Paul's Ephesus ministry (Acts 18:19-21); then his return to Antioch (Acts 18:22); and now we are right here on the third missionary journey.



We just have that to cover Paul's trip to Rome. So that will take us about fifteen years probably. If you are looking for something to read over the summer, I have a good book for you: read that section of Acts. You will get more out of these teachings when you do a little reading on your own.

There are many of the same places that Paul went to on the second missionary journey. The blue line is the trip out and the red line is the trip back. On the trip out Paul is going to go back into Ephesus. God willed it that Paul would go back. Paul said, "I will come back if the Lord wills." Apparently God willed it, and what a ministry that is in Ephesus. We have some fun stuff to look forward to in the Book of Acts.