

Acts 18:18-23, Paul's Return to Jerusalem and Back to Asia
January 2, 1993
H. Van Dyke Parunak

Overview

The history of the church in Ephesus. Compare to the previous seven (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth).

1. Similarities
 - a) Initial receptivity, like Berea
 - b) Long residence, like Corinth
 - c) Major opposition from Gentiles impoverished by the gospel, like Philippi
2. Different in several ways.
 - a) Paul leaves because he wants to be somewhere else, before there has been the first sign of persecution or rejection.
 - b) Majority of the initial work done by his associates, Aquila and Priscilla.
 - c) Interaction with "found" believers, those who have been saved elsewhere, but now cross his path. No longer just Paul's party.
3. Outline

Note the heavy emphasis (three paragraphs out of five) on spiritual influences, whether the centrality of the HS in Christianity or the need for believers to forsake evil spirits.

 - a) 18:18-23, Return to Jerusalem (today)
 - b) 18:24-28, Apollos
 - c) 19:1-7, The Twelve
 - d) 19:8-12, Teaching in Ephesus
 - e) 19:13-20, The Exorcists Exorcised

A. When?

- 18, remained "yet a good while," in addition to the year and a half of v.11.
1. Resulting from the Lord's gracious protection, per the promise in 9-10.
 2. Used in building up the believers; essential step in church planting.
 3. Also used in writing to the Thessalonians, to encourage them in their faith.
 - a) First letter probably just after v.5.
 - b) Second letter perhaps during this extended period.

B. Why?

- 18-19, he had a Nazirite vow that required him to offer a sacrifice in Jerusalem.
1. What is a vow? A promise to offer a sacrifice to God in exchange for his protection or favor.
 - a) Examples (note "if...then" structure):

- 1) Jacob in Gen. 28:20-22.
 - 2) Israel, Num. 21:2
 - 3) Jephthah, Jud. 11:30,31.
 - 4) Hannah in 1 Sam. 1:11
- b) Never required in scripture; completely voluntary. Num. 23:22.
- c) If it is undertaken, it must be carried out. Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21,22; Eccl. 5:4,5.
- d) How about Matt. 5:33,34?
- 1) Difference between oath and vow: Cf. Acts 23:12,21. No example of any NT saint taking an oath (binding ourselves to act by declaring consequences); in a vow, we ask God to act, and simply promise thanksgiving.
 - 2) Do 2 Cor. 1:23 and 1 Thes. 2:5 constitute oaths? No, for no penalty is invoked.
 - 3) Matt. 26:63,64 is not an exception; see Gundry on 5:33ff.
2. What was the occasion for Paul's vow? Can only speculate, but he's had many threats to his mission. At some point he has vowed to make this sacrifice if God would intervene in some way. The extended period of peaceful ministry in Corinth, the first that he has enjoyed, certainly is an appropriate scenario for the fulfillment.
3. Observation: shows the depth of Paul's own Jewishness, to fulfill a Jewish vow. "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." Many theological questions (e.g., eschatology) turn in part on whether God has rejected the Jew. Paul's intense Jewishness (extending even to offering animal sacrifice) shows that he did not see any such rejection.
4. Should we vow today? Our only example (here) is a Jewish vow, and one that requires the temple. Probably should be understood as distinctively Jewish.

C. Who?

1. A&P with him to Ephesus. Perhaps deliberate; he wants to establish a beachhead in Asia, yet also is committed to return to Jerusalem.
2. Silas and Timothy (v.5) probably stayed in Corinth.

D. How?

Introduced the preaching, then left. NB: a good way to evangelize; the more experienced sets the stage, then leaves the detailed work to others. Can do this with home Bible studies.

E. Where?

1. Ephesus
2. Caesaria (seaport)
3. "Gone up" = Jerusalem
4. Antioch, the sending church
5. Back through Asia Minor, cf. 19:1.

Summary

Usually noted as the end of the second missionary journey and the beginning of the third; but Luke does not emphasize it this way at all. Just a furlough by Paul in the midst of the Ephesian mission. Principles:

1. No one-man show. Cultivate the gifts of others and take advantage of them.
2. Paul faithful to his own Jewishness. NT is NOT anti-Jewish; Jewish customs were not abandoned by believing Jews. Still God's chosen people; still carry his promises.

Hymn:

Analysis

A. 18:18-13, Return to Jerusalem

1. reason p

- a) text: 18 (O de\ Pau^los ... e)ce/plei ei)s th\n Suri/an, kai\ su\n au)tw^| Pri/skilla kai\)Aku/las,
 - 1) e)/ti prosmei/nas h(me/ras i(kana\s *writing of Thessalonian epistles*
 - 2) toi^s a)delfoi^s a)potaca/menos
 - 3) keira/menos e)n Kegxreai^s th\n kefalh/n,
- b) reason: ei)^xen ga\r eu)xh/n. *See Hollenbach's constraints; this cannot be governed by keiramenos.*

2. ampl p

- a) summary:
 - 1) 19 kath/nthsan de\ ei)s)/Efeson,
 - 2) ka)kei/nous kate/lipen au)tou^,
- b) amplification:
 - 1) au)to\s de\ ei)selqw\n ei)s th\n sunagwgh\n diele/cato toi^s)Ioudai/ois.
 - 2) ou)k e)pe/neusen,
 - a> 20 e)rwtw/ntwn de\ au)tw^ n e)pi\ plei/ona xro/non mei^nai
 - 3) 21 a)lla\ ... a)nh/xqh a)po\ th^s)Efe/sou:
 - a> a)potaca/menos
 - b> kai\ ei)pw/n,
 - 1> Pa/lin a)naka/myw pro\s u(ma^s tou^ qeou^ qe/lontos,
 - 4) 22 kai\ ... kate/bh ei)s)Antio/xean,
 - a> katelqw\n ei)s Kaisa/reian,
 - b> a)naba\s
 - c> kai\ a)spasa/menos th\n e)kklhsi/an,
 - 5) 23 kai\ ... e)ch^lqen,
 - a> poihsas xro/non tina\
 - b> dierxo/menos kaqech^s th\n Galatikh\n xw/ran kai\ Frugi/an,
 - c> e)pisthri/zwn pa/ntas tou\s maqhta/s.

