

II. Third Journey

AD 53–57. Acts 18:23–21:16

Paul retraced the route of his second journey through Galatia and Phrygia (presumably Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch), “strengthening all the disciples” (18:23 cf. 14:22; 15:32, 41). He continued, probably along via Sebaste, to Ephesus, the trip he wanted to make on the second journey. Antioch–Ephesus 750 mi/1200 km.

A. Ephesus

Capital of the province of Asia. Had been a major port, but the harbor had been silting up. Custodian (*neōkoros* 19:35) of the cult of Artemis of Ephesus. Artemis (Roman Diana) was a fertility goddess and the goddess of hunting. The Temple of Artemis was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

1. John’s Baptism

In Ephesus were those who knew only the baptism of John (the Baptist):

1. Apollos of Alexandria (18:24–28): had come to Ephesus, an eloquent speaker but knowing only the baptism of John. Presumably through disciples of John the Baptist he had accepted that Jesus was the Messiah and the call to repentance, but did not know of his death and resurrection and the gift of the Spirit and their significance. Though he taught accurately (ἀκριβῶς) the things of Jesus, Priscilla and Aquila taught him more accurately (ἀκριβέστερον). With a letter of commendation, he went to Achaia (province, capital Corinth), where he was a powerful speaker (cf. 1 Cor 1–4).
2. Twelve disciples of John (19:1–7):

2. Paul’s ministry in Ephesus

1. Synagogue: 3 months.
2. Hall of Tyrannus: 2 years.

Converts took gospel throughout Asia to both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles), e.g. Epaphras of Colosse returned to the Lycus Valley (Colosse, Hierapolis, Laodicea; Col 1:7; 4:12–13). In Asia: the seven churches of Revelation (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea); five of the seven letters of Ignatius of Antioch c. 110 (Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, Smyrna).

3. Problems with Corinth

While Paul was in Ephesus serious problems arose with the church in Corinth. Some rejected his authority, apostolic credentials and teaching. There was an extensive correspondence:

- Paul wrote a first letter to Corinth (now lost) about separating from the ungodly.
- Corinth sent Paul a letter asking about marital problems, food sacrificed to idols, behavior of women in worship, the Lord’s supper, spiritual gifts.
- members of Chloe’s household notified Paul of quarreling in the church (1 Cor 1:11).
- Paul wrote a second letter (our 1 Cor) with Sosthenes, responding to their letter (“now concerning...” Περὶ δὲ), correcting them. Paul was sending Timothy, and intended to visit himself. Aquila and Prisca, who host a house church in Ephesus, send greetings (16:19)
- Paul made a “painful visit” to Corinth (his second visit; first visit was 18 mo. on second journey).
- Paul wrote a third “severe letter” (now lost).
- Paul wrote a fourth letter (our 2 Cor) with Timothy from Macedonia, intending to make a third

6. Further Expansion: Journeys 2, 3

visit.

4. Departure

Paul intended to revisit Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) and Achaia (Corinth), then return to Jerusalem, then go to Rome. He sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to Macedonia (19:21-22), and stayed in Ephesus.

So successful was Paul's ministry that the sellers of Artemis souvenirs lost business. A riot erupted in the theater. Paul then left.

B. Macedonia and Corinth

Macedonia: presumably visited Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. Traveled "through these regions," perhaps along via Egnatia to the Adriatic coast.

Corinth: stayed three months. Wrote Romans.

1. Romans

Paul had fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum (province of Dalmatia, just north of Dyrrachium, the western end of via Egnatia). His ambition was to preach the gospel in new territory. Had long wanted to visit Rome, but frequently prevented. Wants to visit Rome on way to Spain. But first, will take collection of Gentiles in Macedonia, Achaia to the poor in Jerusalem. Then to Spain via Rome. (Rom 15:19-29)

Paul sent the letter with Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchrae; she would have explained the letter to the Romans. Though Paul had never been to Rome, he knew many of the believers there, who had moved to Rome. Priscilla and Aquila had returned to Rome and were hosting a house church (16:3-4; Claudius had died in 54; his edict banishing Jews from Rome was presumably rescinded).

2. The Collection

As an expression of Jew-Gentile mutuality Paul wanted to take a monetary collection from the (Gentile) churches of Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem for the poor (Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9).

- 1 Cor 16:1-4 (written from Ephesus): on the first day of each week set aside money so no collection will be necessary when Paul arrives. He will send the collection to Jerusalem with those whom the Corinthian church accredits by letter.
- 2 Cor 8-9 (written from Macedonia): the Macedonians have given generously, begging for the favor (*charis*) of participation (*koinōnia*) in the relief (*diakonia*) of the saints (8:4). Paul is sending Titus and others to take the collection. He has boasted to the Macedonians that the Achaian Christians are ready to give.
- Rom 15:25-28 (written from Corinth): the Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make their contribution (*koinōnia*) for the poor in Jerusalem; Paul is bringing this aid (*diakoneō*). The Gentiles owe this: they share (*koinōneō*) in the spiritual things of the Jews, so they should minister (*leitourgeō*) their material things.

C. Return to Jerusalem

Because of a plot against him by Jews, Paul canceled plans to sail to Syria; instead he went overland to Macedonia, accompanied by representatives of the churches who helped carry the collection: Sopater

of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy of Lystra, Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. They proceeded to Troas, while Paul spent Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread 57 in Philippi with Luke, then they sailed to Troas.

Ship: Troas-Assos (Paul walked to Assos)–Mitylene (Lesbos)–opposite Chios–Samos–Miletus–Cos–Rhodes–Patara.

From Miletus Paul summoned the Ephesians elders and gave them a final charge.

Ocean-going ship: Patara–Tyre–Ptolemais–Caesarea.

The disciples in Tyre through the Spirit urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. In Caesarea, Agabus told through the Spirit that in Jerusalem Paul would be bound and handed over to the Gentiles.