

When These Things Were Accomplished

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The video version is at: <https://youtu.be/KjA99APqbr4>

The scripture reading is Acts: 20:1-37

When Paul had left Syrian Antioch for this third journey through Asia and Macedonia, he purposed to take a collection for the believers in Jerusalem and Galilee who were facing persecution from both the non-believing Jews and the Romans. Now, nearly four years later, Paul is heading back to Israel. He will swing through Macedonia and Greece to encourage the congregations and to pick up the funds that the congregations had been setting aside for their brothers in Israel.

Acts 20:1-2 NKJV 1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. 2 Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed there three months.

This trip would not be the easy journey home like his return from Corinth on his second journey. On this trip, he would be faced with enemies who either wanted to kill him or steal the funds he was bringing back to Jerusalem.

Over the four years of Paul's journey, the political situation in Rome had changed once again. Emperor Claudius was poisoned by his wife opening up the way for her seventeen year old son Nero to become emperor. At the death of Claudius, Jews were allowed to return to Rome. When Paul received this news while in Ephesus, he made plans to go to Rome after delivering the collection of funds to Israel.

Acts 19:21 NKJV 21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

It was after this that the idol makers in Ephesus caused a riot and made staying in Ephesus dangerous for Paul. However, Paul had already made plans to visit the congregations, collect their donations, and head for Jerusalem. With that in mind, Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus ahead to tell the congregations that he was coming soon.

Acts 19:22 NKJV 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

Around the same time, Priscilla and Aquila, who were refugees from Rome and were with Paul in Corinth and Ephesus, returned to Rome. When Paul writes his letter to the Roman believers from Corinth while on this journey back to Jerusalem, he writes to the Romans about his intent to visit them after going to Jerusalem.

Romans 1:9-10 NKJV 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.

In his letter, Paul sends greetings to Priscilla and Aquila who had already arrived in Rome.

Romans 16:3-4 NKJV 3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Paul will visit Rome after his time in Jerusalem, but not in the manner that he expected.

The funds that Paul was bringing to help the believers in Israel must have been significant. The congregations had been saving up and setting them aside for nearly four years. In addition, Paul used a little competition between the congregations to raise additional funds. When Paul arrived in Macedonia, he bragged about the contributions that the Corinthians had already set aside, admitting this in his letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 9:2 NKJV 2 For I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.

In this same letter, Paul boasted about the generosity of the Macedonians encouraging the Corinthians to match them in their generosity.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 NKJV 1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

Paul's plans for an orderly departure from Ephesus were disrupted by the riot. He and his companions left Ephesus in late fall heading up the coast of Asia for Troas where he had arranged to meet up with Timothy and Erastus. Paul explains some of the trials of this journey in his letter to the Corinthians from Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13 NKJV 12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, 13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

Macedonia was a province of Greece including the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Paul was able to meet up with Timothy in Macedonia somewhere along Timothy's projected route to Troas. They stayed three months in Greece bringing us to the late winter or early spring of 56 CE. Paul was anxious to get to Jerusalem. He had spent the winter in the seaport city of Corinth hoping to sail directly from there to Syria and, from the coast of Syria, up to Jerusalem. However, Paul learned that some Jews planned to kill him on the ship.

Acts 20:3-6 NKJV 3 And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5 These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. 6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

If Paul had been able to leave straight from Corinth, he would have been in Jerusalem for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Instead, he traveled back through Macedonia, spending the feast at Philippi before sailing the short distance over to Troas where he met up with the rest of his companions.

While in Troas, Paul spent time in teaching and exhortation as he did everywhere he traveled. An interesting event happened during this visit in Troas on the evening before he was to continue on his journey.

Acts 20:7-8 NKJV 7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.

On the Jewish calendar, the day begins at sunset. To us in this culture where we count the day as beginning at sunrise, this would have been Saturday evening not Sunday morning. After the usual Sabbath gathering, the believers would have enjoyed an afternoon rest and met together as the Sabbath was coming to an end. This meeting, which dates back to before the time of Yeshua, is called the Havdalah which means separation. The Sabbath is a holy day set apart to God. To set it apart, The Jewish tradition is to light the candles to begin the Sabbath. It ends with lighting another candle, sharing a meal, and breathing from the aroma of special spices. According to the website Chabad.org, a person receives an extra soul on the Sabbath that is more disposed to relaxation, joy and celebration of the Sabbath. This "extra soul" is released at the end of the Sabbath and smelling the spices brings comfort for the loss of the extra soul.ⁱ

The incident related by Luke in Acts happens after the Havdalah ceremony.

Acts 20:9-12 NKJV 9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." 11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. 12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

It seems that Eutychus had need of the "extra soul" of the Sabbath! Paul continued to teach until morning, and when he left, the believers in Troas received comfort in Eutychus' restored life.

Paul and his companions set sail from Troas heading toward Ephesus and the open sea. They traveled along the coastline stopping at many ports along the way until they reached the port of Miletus near Ephesus. Paul decided to bypass Ephesus because he wanted to get to Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Shavuot or in Greek, Pentecost.

Acts 20:16 NKJV 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

When they arrived in Miletus, Paul sent for the elders of the congregation in Ephesus to meet him there. Paul encourages the elders and lets them know what the Holy Spirit had revealed about his visit to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:22-24 NKJV 22 "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Even though Paul knew that he would face imprisonment and great challenges when he arrived in Jerusalem, Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem. Like his master Yeshua, he set his face towards Jerusalem and whatever awaited him there. The Holy Spirit had also revealed to Paul that he would not return to Ephesus again.

Acts 20:25 NKJV 25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

Paul wanted to have closure with this congregation with whom he had spent nearly three years. He declared that he was a faithful watchman over the congregation. The prophet Ezekiel describes the consequences for a watchman who fails to deliver the warning.

Ezekiel 33:6 NKJV 6 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'

Paul would not be guilty of failing to warn any person in Ephesus about the Messiah. Paul declared that he had faithfully and fully declared the gospel message. Further, he was, now, passing on that responsibility to the elders of the congregation.

Acts 20:26-28 NKJV 26 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Paul didn't warn the elders about trouble coming from the world or outside the body of believers; he warned them to watch for those who would try to destroy the congregation from within the body!

Acts 20:29-31 NKJV 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Paul is not the only one to warn about destruction coming from within the body of believers. In John's first letter to the congregations, he warns that the spirit of antichrist comes from within the body.

1 John 2:18-19 NKJV 18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

Jude, the brother of Yeshua, wrote to all the congregations warning about false doctrine rising from within the body.

Jude 1:3-4 NKJV 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude goes on to pronounce a threefold judgment on those who would urge believers to walk in ungodly ways.

Jude 1:10-11 NKJV 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Paul had also written to the Thessalonians five or six years earlier telling them that the last days would be preceded by a great falling away led by the son of perdition.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NKJV 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and

exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Paul concludes his words of warning to the elders of Ephesus by reminding them to stay focused on God and their eternal inheritance.

Acts 20:32 NKJV 32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

As Paul gets ready to leave Miletus and continue his journey to Jerusalem for the Feast of Shavuot, his thoughts turn to the funds he is delivering to Jerusalem and the need for them.

Acts 20:33-35 NKJV 33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Paul's words assure the Ephesians that as he had always been a faithful steward of his own funds, he was also a faithful steward of the funds entrusted to him to deliver them to those in need. His words encourage the Ephesians to continue in their generosity.

As Paul concluded his instructions, his ship was waiting to take him to Syria and Jerusalem. But before he left, they knelt down and prayed together.

Acts 20:36-38 NKJV 36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Paul's journey home had already taken nearly six months and he was no closer to home than when he had started! He was still just outside of Ephesus. The journey had been filled with delays and detours as he avoided those who would kill him or perhaps rob him of the considerable sum of money he carried. During this time, he had the opportunity to visit many congregations that he had not planned on visiting and spending the Feast of Passover with believers in Troas.

Trouble and tribulation awaited Paul in Jerusalem, but he was strengthened for the ordeal ahead by the encouragement of the believers. As we face times of trouble and tribulation, may we encourage and lift each other up in the LORD and receive comfort from others.

Study Questions:

1. What importance did Paul place on helping other believers who were in need? How is this communicated in Paul's words and actions?
2. Which events does Paul seem to plan his trips to Jerusalem around? What does this tell us about Paul? What does this tell us about how he views the community of believers in relation to Judaism as then practiced?
3. Paul laid himself over Eutychus' body to raise him from the dead. Who else did this? How are the situations similar? Why do you think Luke included this event in his account?
4. Paul warned the Ephesians about threats to the body from within the body itself. Why is this a greater threat than threats from outside the body?

5. What did this extended journey accomplish for Paul?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

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ⁱ https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/260254/jewish/Why-Do-We-Smell-Aromatic-Spices.htm