

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

94. Were the Christians in Ephesus learning what being Christian in both thought and practice meant?
95. How did Luke describe the progress being made by God's word?

96. Approximately what year is it, as Paul concludes his work in Ephesus?

97. What descriptions of the Church and the Christians did Luke use in Acts?

98. What reasons did Demetrius have for opposing Paul?

99. How many times do you find the "mob spirit" in Acts? (Is it still evident in our time?)

100. What evidence do you see of the "democratic process" in Ephesus? (Remember that some of our government processes come from the Romans.)

101. What term used to describe the church also was used to describe the crowds in the theater?

LESSON SEVEN (20:1-38)

In Macedonia, 20:1,2

20 *After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and having exhorted them took leave of them and departed for Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through these parts and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.*

V. 1 - Paul took leave from Ephesus, probably in the year A.D. 55 or 56, during the spring/summer. We recall that Timothy and Erastus were already in Macedonia, 19:22.

V. 2 - How much time he spent there in Macedonia is unknown. (Compare Romans 15:19). It is quite possible that II Corinthians was written during this trip. Titus finally arrived in Macedonia from Corinth (II Cor. 7:5ff) and helped lift an offering from those churches. He apparently took II Corinthians to Corinth, ahead of Paul's arrival there.

At Corinth in Greece, 20:3-5

3 There he spent three months and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia. 4 Sopater of Beroea, the son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These went on and were waiting for us at Troas,

V. 3 - While in Greece (Corinth), most think that Romans and Galatians were written. Because of the Jewish plot, instead of sailing to Syria, he went by land back through Macedonia. Thus from v. 1 to v. 6, most of a year had elapsed, in which time Paul was active in many ways.

V. 4 - All the men were chosen from the various churches in Macedonia and elsewhere to help with the collection being made for the Judean brethren, and some were evidently used to help evangelize also. The men sailed to Troas, awaiting Paul who was coming through Macedonia by land, with Luke as his companion. It is noticeable that

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Paul's party was careful with the offerings, doubtless thinking both of thieves and any who might be suspicious concerning Paul's integrity (cf. II Cor. 8:20,21).

V. 5 - Luke again became an eyewitness to the account we are studying.

At Philippi, 20:6a **In Troas, 20:6b-13**

6 but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 There were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered. 9 And a young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window. He sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer; and being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down and bent over him, and embracing him said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." 11 And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. 12 And they took the lad away alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there; for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land.

V. 6 - **the days of unleavened bread** - a point in time by the Jewish calendar. It has been at least a year since I Corinthians was written from Ephesus (note 1 Cor. 16) and it is now A.D. 56,57. As II Cor. 2:12 shows, Paul had been to Troas the preceding fall, but had not stayed, because of his concern for the report of Titus who was coming from Corinth.

V. 7 - This oft-quoted text shows the practice of the brethren in Troas. The churches in Corinth and Galatia (I Cor. 16:2) evidently had the same practice. The early churches evidently met on Sunday, and did not observe Saturday as a liturgical

day for 300 years. It seems evident that the early Christians understood that the fourth command was a part of the law that was made void in Christ.

The few records we have of the early centuries show some divergence in practice among the churches in regard to Sunday. In Bithynia, a service about dawn included singing, prayer and vows to lead holy lives. In the evening they observed the communion and other things such as confession of sins, preaching, etc. In some areas, the communion service was separate from the fellowship meal (as it seemed to be in I Cor. 11).

Early church councils encouraged observance of Sunday, and inveighed against Sabbath observance (because of Jews often attempted to Judaize those who observed the Sabbath). Little was said about rest on the Lord's Day, since many Christians were slaves and could not do so, while others recognized that the N.T. said nothing about rest in order to observe Sunday. It wasn't until the 6th century that manual labor was forbidden for Christians on Sunday.

Probably one of the major reasons why the early Christians felt so free to change days of worship was their recognition that Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath had the prerogative to change that day if he chose to do so. It seems clear from Romans 14 that one might hold one day above another, and others consider all to be alike. However, such differences of belief did not involve observance of Sunday or another day as a required part and parcel of his salvation. That sort of thinking essentially would make Christianity into a legal system. One must be careful that such does not happen, because it is rather easy to do so.

Justin (2nd century) argued that Sunday observance was proper because God began his creative work on the day, and Jesus arose on that day. All the "Church Fathers" used the expression "Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10) to refer to Sunday. From that time to this, Christians have kept Sunday as the day of worship, albeit in varying manners.

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As mentioned above, by the mid-second century the early morning worship had become the norm. In Justin Martyr's description, Sunday worship was composed of 1) immersions (if any), 2) preaching, 3) prayers, 4) Lord's Supper.

The problem with our text is: What system of time (Jewish or Roman) did Luke use? Since they were in Roman territory, and away from the area of Palestine, it is more probable that the meeting began on Sunday evening, and lasted until Monday morning.

V. 9 - The late hour, long speech, flickering lights: all proved too much for Eutychus, forever immortalized by those who follow in his train during preaching.

V. 10 - Paul repeated what Elijah (I Kings 17:21) and Elisha (II Kings 4:34) did. He cut off the tumult they were making (see Mark 5:39), and restored Eutychus to life.

V. 11 - **he conversed** - From the Greek we get our word "homily" or "sermon".

V. 12 - This verse shows that the boy was dead, but came back to life.

V. 13 - Troas was some 20-25 miles north of Assos, and about 150 miles north of Miletus.

At Assos, 20:14a

At Mitylene, 20:14b

Over against Chios, 20:15a

At Samos, 20:15b

In Miletus, 20:15c-38

14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. 15 And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to

be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews: 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I now that all you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

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36 And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept and embraced Paul and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they brought him to the ship.

Luke notes that they “touched” at Samos (v. 15). Our word “parable” comes from the Greek word behind “touched” which implies a point of contact, etc. Miletus was about 28 miles south of Ephesus. It used to be an important city, but Ephesus eclipsed it. Like Ephesus, it is now several miles from the sea, the harbor being filled up with silt.

V. 16 - Paul left Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread (Passover) and intended to arrive in Jerusalem some 50 days later at Pentecost. We remember that an offering for the Judean brethren was being taken by Paul and those with him.

V. 17 - Unwilling to pass by Ephesus altogether, Paul called the elders there to him. We note that the Ephesian congregation had elders soon after its beginning, just as the congregation in Derbe, etc., did.

elders - Note that in v. 28, the Greek words for overseers (“guardians”) and shepherd (“to feed”) are used to describe these men. In the second century, bishops (overseers) were elevated over other elders as church polity began to depart from the Biblical pattern. Titus 1:5 and 1:7 will show that the terms were applied to the same man. etc. In I Peter 5:1-4, all three terms are used.

As is clear, these Christian men loved each other, although the Ephesian letter does not tell us as clearly as this account does. It will be good to recall that Timothy probably served the church in Ephesus - so read I Tim. in this light.

V. 18 - Not to detract from the importance of the text, and what is said - it is yet pertinent to note the similarities and differences from the other recorded speeches in Acts. As someone has said,

“It is most of Paul and least of Luke.” Luke probably did not hear the other speeches of Paul and Peter, but this one he did hear. The speech itself, when compared to Paul’s epistles, leaves little doubt as to the one giving it.

Again, call to mind the problems that he endured with the Corinthians (especially evident in the II Corinthian letter), and then meditate upon Paul’s appeal to these men regarding his ministry among them.

V. 19 - **serving** - The common word for slave/servant. The word was used by Jesus (Matt. 20:27) to describe the relationship that should exist of each Christian to the other. Note Matthew 6:24; Romans 12:11.

Paul did so with the Christian virtue (but considered anything but a virtue in the pagan world), lowliness of mind (Matt. 11:29; Isa. 53) and tears (note v. 31; II Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18); and in all these with knowledge that the Jews were continually attempting to silence him. (See Rom. 10:21) It certainly wasn’t a carefree life!

plots of the Jews - Some have been described for us in previous chapters, though doubtless many others occurred that Luke does not mention.

V. 20 - Paul, in spite of great difficulties, yet withheld not one thing he thought profitable to these people. One with less commitment might draw back for fear of others, but Paul publicly and privately served them.

house to house - I Cor. 16:9 mentions the house of Aquila and the church that met there.

V. 21 - **testifying** to everyone (in the synagogues, school of Tyrannus, and in their homes) about their need to repent towards God (i.e., recognize their sin and make right their relationship to God) and place trust in Jesus Christ as Lord (which act permits God to forgive their sins through the redemption in Christ Jesus). Thus, the basic

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gospel message was given to everyone in Ephesus/Asia. Peter “testified” (same word) in Acts 2:40.

We need not feel amiss in preaching the same basic message, even if immersion is not mentioned, per se. Immersion is only necessary when the mind has been changed in regard to God’s will and God’s son (Jesus). Trust in Christ will lead to obedience to him as Lord. Immersion is the action taken upon recognition of Jesus’ lordship over one’s life.

We need to realize that word order, per se, is not a very good basis for arguing what a person is to do, and in what order it is to be done. Consider here the fact that we often use Mark 16:15-16 in this fashion; arguing that since belief precedes immersion in the text, therefore, we must have faith prior to immersion. Our assertion about faith and immersion may well be correct, but it is not so just because one word proceeds another. Rather it is so because of the nature of the case. Otherwise, if we argue on the basis of word order, we must repent before we believe. The actual fact is, that when a person accepts Jesus as Lord, said person repents (i.e., changes the mind) in that act. To transfer trust/belief from something/someone to Jesus is a change of mind, and begins a life of mind changing until the mind of the flesh becomes as the mind of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13,14), so that the total person is an accurate, constant reflection of Jesus.

V. 22 - Despite warnings already received (v. 23) and those later from brethren in Tyre and Caesarea who spoke through “the Spirit” Paul will go to Jerusalem. I assume that the Holy Spirit revealed to these various ones the things that awaited Paul, and they on their own urged him not to go on that basis. Any other position means Paul disobeyed direction from the Holy Spirit which seems a doubtful possibility. It is better to hold that Paul had decided to go to Jerusalem, taking the collection with him, trusting that he would be able to serve profitably. (We note in passing that Luke does not mention any particular reason why Paul

was going to Jerusalem, though he knew about the offering, which Paul mentions in 24:17).

V. 23 - The Holy Spirit informed Paul, through many people, what awaited him in Jerusalem and would still be there when he arrived. Few of us could view the distant scene in such clear fashion and yet continue. Jesus knew what awaited him in Jerusalem, and yet continued. We may well rejoice that God does not reveal what lies ahead, and rather helps us take one step at a time.

V. 24 - **do not account** - The Greek says “Nothing of account I make my soul.” restated: My own life I consider to be as worth nothing. The reason for this is that the ministry he had received (bearing witness to the good news of God’s grace) was worth infinitely more than his life.

course - The Greek term means a way, a race, what is laid out ahead.

grace of God - The good news was about God’s grace, manifested in his son, Jesus.

V. 25 - It seems evident that Paul did not expect to see them again. However, from such passages as I Tim. 1:3; 3:14; 4:13; II Tim. 4:13, 20, an impression is given that perhaps he did see them again.

kingdom - Note that to preach the Gospel, v. 24, is to preach the church, and the kingdom, a synonymous entity; Christians being made and becoming a part of Jesus’ body.

V. 26 - Paul says: I did not fail in any regard to tell you all that was my duty to tell you. Clearly, every person, preacher or otherwise, ought to strive for that same goal. Just as clearly, however, is the fact that such a statement is a personal judgment which may not be shared by some or any. There are always those who feel that more could have been said or done. Somewhat disturbing is the fact that more could often have been done. Without questioning Paul’s testimony about himself, it appears to me that few if any get

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done all that is possible to do, even if one has a good conscience at the time. Hence, God's grace will doubtless be needed by most of us. Happily, God doesn't ask for perfection in us, just faithfulness.

innocent - The Greek term means pure, clean, thus innocent, not being the cause for any of them being lost.

V. 27 - Paul had come to them preaching the kingdom (v. 25), and "all the counsel of God." He spoke of the "church" in v. 28 as the effect of what was done. I assume that the church and the kingdom are identical, as far as the counsel/will/plan of God for us is concerned. Notice Ephesians 1:11 (1:3-14) and 3:1-11 in this vein.

V. 28 - The idea of flock and the shepherd is a prominent idea in the O.T. (Psalms 23; Ezek. 34; etc.) and evident in Jesus' teaching (Matt. 9:36; Luke 15:3-7; John 10.) The Holy Spirit had apparently made/placed the men as overseers of the flock through such instructions as are in I Tim. 3. Stated differently, I assume (believe) that the Holy Spirit directed the apostle(s) and the N.T. writers to spell out that which was wanted. In following said directions, the Holy Spirit would be responsible for the effects (in this case, elders in the Ephesus assembly).

Much argument has surrounded this verse, since the Greek texts vary between "church of God" and "church of (the) Lord." The reason is that the next phrase speaks of his blood. If "Lord" be the correct reading, no particular problem arises. If "God" be correct, then God shed his blood. To many, both then and now, to ascribe deity to Christ was bad enough, but to have God shedding his blood was too much. Hence, many scribes through the centuries wrote in the word their theology dictated. (A similar verse is John 1:18) The issue then is about the person of Jesus, his total nature, including the ideas of divinity and humanity uniting in one person. If Jesus were deity in flesh, then the text could correctly read that God could die (shed

his blood) to purchase the church. We so believe and teach.

V. 29 - Jesus had spoken of wolves (John 10:12) but not their source. Here Paul states the same fear, and I Tim. 1:20 shows that he spoke truly. Check Revelation 2:2.

V. 30 - As is plain in the several epistles, all kinds of false doctrine was taught, by those in and out of the assemblies. Some room for differences must be made, but some consideration of motives must also be made. Paul accused Elymas of perverting God's word in 13:10.

V. 31 - **be alert** - Watch or be careful. Jesus used this idea, as in Matthew 25:13, etc. Paul tried to admonish/warn/put sense into every person so that they would not be children, but mature in faith. The references to his own ministry among them had the purpose of helping the elders see what true leaders would do, their manner of life, etc. When the "wolves" came along, or men teaching perverse things, they could remember Paul's example and use it as a means of judgment.

V. 32 - The apostles knew that God's word, carefully followed, could do for them what nothing else could. It is surely obligatory upon us to teach God's Word if such results can be obtained.

Paul often wrote about building people up, and of the inheritance awaiting Christians. I Peter 1 speaks of Christians and their inheritance. Jude, v. 20 has "build yourselves up on your most holy faith."

In 14:23, Paul had committed the Christians there to the Lord; here to the word of his grace.

V. 33 - This verse doubtless counters accusations made against Paul by some perhaps on account of the offering he was taking to Jerusalem. Note II Cor. 12:11-18.

V. 34 - I Cor. 4:12 states that Paul worked to supply his own needs, as we know from Acts. Verse 35 will elaborate this point.

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Several times in his epistles, Paul encourages toil as in II Thess. 3 and Eph. 4:28. See Matthew 11:28.

V. 35 - Often Paul encouraged Christians to follow his example, and evidently always attempted to set before them a good example.

We surely understand the happy state of affairs in receiving from others, but doubtless also realize that more happiness is ours in giving to others (if giving is done freely, without thought of return. See Luke 6:27-36; 14:12-14; Matt. 5:43-48). Since this quotation is not in our extant Gospels, it has always caused men to wonder how much Paul knew of Jesus' teachings, and how much more was known than was written down for posterity.

V. 37 - The word for "kiss" is often translated "love". These men had learned and grown together, and loved one another in Christ.

V. 38 - **the face** - The Hebrew way of speaking about one's person/self.

QUESTIONS

102. Verses 3 and 19 speak of Jewish plots. Did Luke record any of these for us?

103. Who all was going with Paul to Jerusalem?

104. Why were these men traveling with him?

105. About what time of the year was it when the group left Philippi for Troas?

106. Does Luke state why Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem, or be there by Pentecost?

107. What terms describe the men from Ephesus that Paul called unto him?

108. How did Paul describe his ministry at Ephesus?

109. What had the Holy Spirit told Paul about the trip to Jerusalem?

110. What was more important to Paul than his own life?

111. Can one be innocent of the blood of another if the other person is yet unsaved?

112. Is the phrase "the whole counsel of God" defined for us?

113. What relationship did Paul say the elders had to the church in Ephesus?

114. For what reason(s) would the elders need to be watchful of themselves and of the flock?

115. What two things is God's Word capable of doing in a person's life?

116. Is it not a blessing to receive something?

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117. What command of Jesus had the men evidently obeyed? (cf. John 13:34-35)

LESSON EIGHT

(21:1-40)

At Cos, 21:a

At Rhodes, 21:1b

At Patara, 21:1c-2

21 *And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set sail.*

V. 1 - Cos was a famous place, Hippocrates and Apelles having been born there. There was also a great medical school there.

V. 2 - **Phoenicia** - This country, with its two main cities of Tyre and Sidon, had its major source of revenue from shipping, being a poor agricultural land.

In the Sight of Cyprus on the Left, 21:3a

At Tyre, 21:3b-6

3 When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 5 And when our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were outside the city; and kneeling down on the beach we prayed and bade one another farewell. 6 Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

V. 3 - The ship was a larger one than they had previously used, a cargo ship, able to sail across the open seas. From the seven-day stay, it may have taken that long to unload its cargo and load it again in preparation for sailing.

V. 4 - The same general message was given Paul here as previously. As commented before, the Spirit had revealed to many that trouble awaited Paul in Jerusalem. On this basis, various ones were urging him not to go. No one, including Paul, had received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that he was not to go to Jerusalem.

V. 5 - We note “children” being mentioned by Luke, which he (as all other writers) rarely does.

V.6 - There is an idiom in Greek here, found also in John 1:11 and 19:27, “the things of them” (i.e., their homes).

In Ptolemais, 21:7

7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the brethren and stayed with them for one day.

V. 7- Ptolemais (Acre, Accho) commanded the road down the sea coast from Phoenicia to Egypt. The Israelites apparently never controlled it, though they did control the area south of it.

Notice that brethren are found everywhere, as seems evident also in chapter 11.

Caesarea, 21:8-14

8 On the morrow we departed and came to Caesarea; and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 And he had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied, 10 While we were staying for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us he took Paul’s girdle and bound his own feet and hands and said, “ Thus says the Holy spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard