

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY A.D. 52/53-57!
ACTS CH18:23 + CH19:1-10



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BACKGROUND TO EPHESUS

From Paul's birth until his appearance in Jerusalem as a persecutor of Christians there is little information concerning his life. We know he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a zealous member of the Pharisee Party (Rom Ch11:1, Phil Ch3:5, Acts Ch23:6), born in Tarsus (modern Turkey), a Roman Citizen (Acts Ch16:37, 21:39, 22:25) and as a young man (Acts Ch7:58, Gal Ch1:13, 1 Cor Ch15:9) he was given official authority to direct the persecution of Christians. Of Paul's personal appearance, the canonical account suggests only that it was not impressive (1 Cor Ch2:3, 2 Cor Ch10:10). Information about Paul's conversion is found in Acts Ch9, 22, 26.

Paul spent three years following his Baptism preaching in Damascus (Gal Ch1:17, Acts Ch9:19 – 30). Paul then spent only around 2 weeks in Jerusalem, as people plotted to kill him, before spending 10 silent years in Tarsus, his home town. Later, Paul was invited by Barnabas to come to Antioch in Syria, where they both taught for a year, before being sent out by the Church around AD 46-47. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts Ch11:25-26).

HEARD NOT ABOUT JESUS! V1-4

V1 - The new mission starts! After spending time at both the Jerusalem Church and the Church in Antioch, Syria, probably for around a year, the 3rd missionary journey starts, Ch18:23 – Ch21:17.

Luke records for us that whilst Apollos was in Corinth (1st Cor Ch1:10-12; Ch3:1-8, 21-23; Ch4:6; Ch16:12) Paul, who had briefly visited Ephesus on **his second missionary journey around AD 51-52 (Acts Ch18:18-21)**, now returns around AD 52-53 on his third and final missionary journey, staying there for 3 years (Acts Ch20:31).

Ephesus at this time was the Roman Capital Province of Asia, being its fourth largest City behind Rome (Italy), Alexandria (Egypt) and Antioch (Syria), with a population of around 250,000 people, a lecture hall that could hold 25,000 people. **It referred to itself as “The first and greatest metropolis of Asia!”** It also held one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World, the Temple of Artemis (Diana), a fertility god. Ephesus, also had a thriving harbour, river, good road systems, and was a capital of commerce. A city that believed their goddess, Artemis, a grotesque looking many breasted image, had fallen from heaven. A city full of so called “spirituality and superstitions!”

V2 - Paul comes across disciples of John the Baptist, who at the moment have not heard about Jesus of Nazareth! **Therefore, they are not born again Christians when they meet Paul.** Paul asks them two questions, before providing a summary of their spirituality! John the Baptist's baptism, was one of repentance, pointing to the coming saviour, messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. These 12 (v7) had not heard about the life, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus or the day of Pentecost and the outpouring of The Holy Spirit (Ch2:4), or the outpouring of The Holy Spirit on Gentiles in Samaria (Ch8:17) and in Caesarea (Ch10:44-46)!

HEARD ABOUT JESUS! V5-7

V5 - After hearing about Jesus, His life, death, resurrection and ascension, the 12 give their hearts to the Lord, are baptised, and after Paul has laid his hands upon them (V6), they receive a “filling” of God the Holy Spirit, empowering them for works and service! **With these outward signs, speaking in tongues and prophesying, came The Holy Spirit as an inward invisible reality that demonstrated the presence and power of God!**

Remember earlier in the Book of Acts when we broke down what we believe it means to be “filled” by The Holy Spirit? The “power” that Jesus refers to in Ch1:8, cannot be the power of “regeneration” (becoming a Christian) or the often slow sanctification power of being transformed into the likeness of Christ! For none of these is evident throughout Ch1+2 of Acts. So, what “power” is Jesus referring to? **The “power” that Jesus is promising, is the filling with the “Holy Spirit.” It is a special empowering for ministry that is described as “.....baptised with the Holy Spirit.” and this idea of “baptism” is almost always associated with this extraordinary power for ministry in the book of Acts. Notice that when the baptism with the Spirit happens in Acts Ch2:4, Luke says, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit” The effect of that filling was a powerful and even miraculous testimony to the truth of Christ that resulted in 3,000 people being converted (Acts Ch2:41).**

What is the essence of being baptised with the Holy Spirit? Is it the sound of wind, the tongues of fire, the other languages, the words of praise, the prophecies and dreams and visions? Can we get at the essence of what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, or does it have to include all these things?

I think the essence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit is **when a person, who is already a believer, receives extraordinary spiritual power for Christ-exalting ministry!** There are good reasons for believing that these disciples were already born again and converted and had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them (John Ch13:10; Ch15:3; Romans Ch8:9). But even more important than that is the fact that the issue of the new birth and conversion of the disciples is simply not in view at all in Acts Ch1 + Ch2. Jesus doesn't say, “Wait in Jerusalem until you are born again or converted or put into the body of Christ.” He says, “But you will receive power.....” He doesn't say, “You shall receive membership in the body of Christ when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” He says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”

HEARD ABOUT THE WORD OF JESUS! V8-10

We know through the Book of Acts, that Paul had a practice of preaching in the Jewish synagogues first (where there were ones) before preaching to the Gentiles – **Ch13:14; Ch14:1; Ch17:1; Ch17:10; Ch17:17; Ch18:4; Ch18:19; + Ch19:8!** So, **Paul for the final time in Acts, enters the Jewish synagogue in Ephesus, reasoning with them** (remember as was his custom Ch17:2), no doubt showing them from the Scriptures that the Christ had to suffer and that the

Christ was Jesus of Nazareth!

This happens for 12-13 weeks, before:

- V9 – When some became stubborn (the verb – skleryno- is used for Pharaoh in Exodus Ch13:15)!
- V9 – Continued in their unbelief (which is a conscious choice)!
- V9 – Speaking evil against the Way!

In light of this response, Paul changes venues, from the Jewish Synagogue, to the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus (meaning Tyrant!), where he taught daily between 11am – 4pm for two whole years. Luke records for us that Paul “reasoned” v8+9, “dialeghomenos” meaning to argue a position! He did this for two whole years, so that “all the residents of Asia” heard the word of the Lord! What impact did that have? Check out the map and the following references:

1. Rev Ch2:1 – Ephesus!
2. Rev Ch2:8 – Smyrna!
3. Rev Ch2:12 – Pergamum!
4. Rev Ch2:18 – Thyatira!
5. Rev Ch3:1 – Sardis!
6. Rev Ch3:7 – Philadelphia!
7. Rev Ch3:14 – Laodicea!

APPLICATION!

What about Colossians and Hierapolis?