

Outline

1. Leaving Ephesus
 1. Returns to Macedonia to strengthen those churches
 2. Goes to Greece and remains three months, probably in Philippi
2. Begins to turn toward Jerusalem
 1. Plot of the Jews changes route from an early return back to Syria
 2. Another trip through Macedonia
 3. Back to Troas
 1. Paul speaks to the disciples on the first day of the week — after dark
 2. Eutychus falls asleep and out of the third story window and is taken up dead
 3. Paul takes him in his arms and declares him to be alive
 4. After eating, Paul continues to talk until dawn
 4. From Troas to Assos
 5. From Assos to Mitylene
 6. From Mitylene to Miletus
3. Discussion with Ephesian elders
 1. Defense of prior conduct
 2. Discussion of plans to go to Jerusalem
 3. Exhortations

Commentary

The first part of Acts 20 is spent getting Paul from Ephesus to Troas. This takes Paul from Ephesus to Macedonia and down into Greece (where Acts 20:3 says that he spent three months). Several of Paul's traveling companions are listed in Acts 20:4 and it seems likely that Paul has been "collecting" while preparing to return to Jerusalem in order to bring a gift to those brethren (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3).

There is not much detail given regarding Paul's journey here as there does not appear to be much "new" work done. Mainly, he appears to be revisiting the places he has previously

gone.

We often turn to Acts 20 mainly in order to read verse 7. There are a couple of important things here to note:

1. Acts is written to Greeks (remember it is inscribed to “Theophilus”). Thus, the time periods mentioned are probably reckoned according to the Jewish method (sundown to sundown) but rather according to the Roman method (midnight to midnight).
2. The meeting that is mentioned likely happens in the evening. The first day of the week held no significance to the Romans (or, indeed, to the Jews) and would have been considered a regular work day. The effort expended to meet together, then, would be much more akin to what it takes to attend classes on Wednesday evenings than what is required to wake up on Sunday morning for worship services.

The death of Eutychus may have brought their meeting to a halt. Before the incident, Paul is described as “giving a speech” where afterward it is said that he “conversed” with them.

Paul’s closeness to the Ephesian church is seen in his decision to bypass Ephesus “that he might not have to spend time in Asia” and to then call for their elders to meet with him in Miletus.

Paul spends a lot of time defending his actions among the people of Asia (Acts 20:18-21, 33-35). We know that Paul had detractors (for example, 1 Cor. 9:1-7). Doubtless, some of those detractors had made their way to Ephesus. More importantly, though, he spends some time pointing to the things that they knew about how he acted as providing them an example for how they should act (cf. Acts 20:35 – “In all things I have shown you that...”).

Thought Questions

Consider the following thought questions:

1. On what day did Paul arrive in Troas? How do you know?

2. What is the significance of Acts 20:7? Is any of the rest of the story significant?
3. Why might Paul have wanted to be Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost?
4. What does Paul's discourse to the Ephesian elders teach us about the eldership?
5. How important is prayer to Paul? What in today's lesson might inform your answer?