

13. Acts 20:3 - 21:14



Acts 20:3

Paul came to Greece, where he stayed for three months.

Paul arrives in Corinth towards the end of 56AD and spends the winter of 56-57 there.

While in Corinth Paul writes his [Letter to the Romans](#).



Acts 20:3-4

Paul was about to set sail for Syria when a plot was made against him by the Jews, and so he decided to return through Macedonia. He was accompanied

by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Beroea (Romans 16:21?),

and from Thessalonica, by Aristarchus (see Acts 19:29; 27:2;

Philemon 24; Colossians 4:10) and Secundus,

by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy (from Lystra)

as well as by Tychicus (Colossians 4:7; Ephesians 6:21; 2 Tim 4:12; Titus 3:12)

and Trophimus (see Acts 21:29; 2 Timothy 4:20) from Asia.

They may be accompanying Paul as representatives of the various Gentile churches who are contributing to the collection which Paul has been organising for the needy communities in Judea (see Acts 24:17).

From Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, written from Macedonia, we learn that Paul is taking up to Jerusalem a collection which he has been organising throughout the Gentile Churches for the needy Christians in Judea (see 2Corinthians 8-9; see also Romans 15:25-28; see Acts 24:17). Paul wants this collection to be a sign of the communion between the Jewish and the Gentile communities.

Acts 20:5-6

They went ahead and were waiting for us (see Acts 16:10) in Troas. We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we joined them in Troas, where we stayed for seven days.



Acts 20:7-12

On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. A young man named Eutychus (Fortunate), who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left. Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted.

Everything about this scene speaks of Easter and a communion of disciples commemorating Jesus' passion, death and resurrection.

Luke speaks of **'days of Unleavened Bread'** (Acts 20:6; see 12:3; also Luke 22:7).

of **'the first day of the week'** (Acts 20:7; see Luke 24:1; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

of a gathering **'to break bread'** (Acts 20:7; see 2:42,46; 27:35; also Luke 22:19; 24:30,35).

Luke's description of the meal which Paul shared with the community in Troas reminds us of Paul's words to the Corinthians: 'I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

Paul was speaking about the whole life of a disciple. Our 'body', that is to say, the way we spend our time and energy, including all the ways in which we relate to the world and to others, is to be like the body of Jesus: given, however broken, as a gift of self-giving love.

Here at Troas, this communal sharing is expressed in the intimacy of table fellowship in which the risen Jesus continues to give himself to his assembled disciples, to nurture, strengthen and encourage them. The communion continues throughout the night, ending only with the dawn.

Acts 20:13-16

Assos to Miletus 300ks

We went ahead to the ship and set sail for **Assos**, intending to take Paul on board there; for he had made this arrangement, intending to go by land himself. When he met us in Assos, we took him on board and went to **Mitylene**. We sailed from there, and on the following day we arrived opposite **Chios**. The next day we touched at **Samos**, and the day after that we came to **Miletus**. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; he was eager to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.



Acts 20:17-23

From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church (compare Acts 14:23) to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord (see Luke 22:27) with all **humility** (ταπεινοφροσύνη - only time) and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus. And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me.

Acts 20:24-27

But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course (2 Timothy 4:7) and the ministry (διακονία) that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace. And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom (see 19:8), will ever see my face again. Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. (see Ephesians 1:2-14).

Paul has been among them 'proclaiming the kingdom, demonstrating in word and deed the presence and activity of God's amazing love and what happens when we welcome that love into our lives. This was the subject of Jesus' whole life and ministry, prior to his death (see Luke 8:1; 16:16) and after (see Acts 1:3). It was to proclaim this kingdom that Jesus sent out his apostles (see Luke 9:2,60), and it is for the coming of this kingdom that we are to pray (see Luke 11:1).

Acts 20:28

Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

The presbyters are to take care to carry out the responsibilities placed on them by the Holy Spirit. In their position as **elders** in the church, they are **overseers** and **shepherds** of the flock. The word ‘overseer’ (ἐπισκόπος) was to become the title for the person with overall organisational responsibility for the local church (our word ‘bishop’ derives from it).

Though this is the only time Luke uses ἐπισκόπος he has spoken of God’s ἐπισκόπη (see Luke 19:44), and of the ministry of ἐπισκόπη entrusted to the apostles (see Acts 1:20).

Those responsible for religious leadership in the community of Israel are frequently spoken of as **shepherds** ('pastors'). God promised through Jeremiah: 'I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding' (Jeremiah 3:15); and warns: 'Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture' (Jeremiah 23:1). Ezekiel chapter thirty-four develops the image at some length. Paul, too, speaking of the various gifts poured out over the church by the risen Jesus, includes the gift of 'pastors' (Ephesians 4:11).

The church is precious to God: it cost God ‘**the blood of his own Son**’ (Acts 20:28), the ‘beloved Son’ sent by the Father to reveal God’s love (see Luke 20:13; Ephesians 1:7). We recall Jesus’ words at the last supper: ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’ (Luke 22:20). As Paul wrote to the Colossians: ‘through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross’ (Colossians 1:20).

Acts 20:29-32

I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified.

As overseers, it is their responsibility to unmask false teachers, not only by their teaching but, more importantly, as Paul will add in the following sentences, by the example of their lives, given over entirely to grace. Paul's concerns about false teaching find expression in his letters (see Colossians 2:8; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:15).

Acts 20:33-38

I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. You know for yourselves that I **worked** with my own hands to support myself and my companions [see 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 4:12].

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we **must** support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Thucydides)' When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed. There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship.

Acts 21:1-3

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**. When we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, we went on board and set sail. We came in sight of Cyprus; and leaving it on our left, we sailed to Syria and landed at **Tyre**, because the ship was to unload its cargo there.



Acts 21:4-8

We looked up the disciples and stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. When our days there were ended, we left and proceeded on our journey; and all of them, with wives and children, escorted us outside the city. There we knelt down on the beach and prayed and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at **Ptolemais** (Acco); and we greeted the believers and stayed with them for one day. The next day we left and came to **Caesarea**.



Acts 21:8-14

We went into the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy. While we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus (see Acts 11:28) came down from Judea. He came to us and took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, "This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles (see Luke 18:32)."' When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, 'What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem (see Luke 13:33; Acts 20:24) for the name of the Lord Jesus.' Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say, 'The Lord's will be done' (see Luke 22:42)