
a *Grace Notes* course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study
by Warren Doud

Lesson 311: **Acts 18:14-28**

ACTS, Lesson 311, Acts 18:14-28

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Acts 18:14-28**Acts 18:14-16**

And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O you Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look you to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

And he drove them from the judgment seat.

Gallio would only have been interested in issue of Roman law. If Paul's offense was against Roman law, the Jews would have to prove that Paul was a security risk to Rome. Since Paul's offense concerned the religious sensitivities of the Jews, Gallio refused to hear evidence.

The Roman government allowed Jews to worship God as freely as other people worshipped pagan idols. For example, when the populations of Alexandria, Antioch, and cities of Asia Minor wanted to persecute Jews, Roman authorities always upheld the "religious freedom of the Jews, as long as they did not forfeit these rights through revolution action (as they did in AD 66)."¹

Paul did not have to open his mouth in his own defense. Gallio told the Jews to stop wasting his time, and he kicked them out of the courtroom, probably using some force, as it says "he drove them from the judgment seat".

Acts 18:17

Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

¹ Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, vol. 3, p. 132. See also Josephus *Antiquities* 19.5.3 [289]; 20.1.2 [10-14].

In 18:8, Crispus had been called the chief ruler of the Synagogue, so Sosthenes may have succeeded him in that position. Perhaps Crispus had been removed from a leadership position when he embraced Christianity. But Sosthenes himself became a Jewish believer and an ally of Paul, and Paul later refers to him as a brother (1 Cor. 1:1).

These Greeks, then, may have been proselytes from the synagogue who fell on Sosthenes, who may have argued against the angry Jews.

As Gallio had already made up his mind in the matter, he was indifferent to what the Jews and proselytes did; he was only interested in clearing the court so he could get on with Roman business.

Acts 18:18

And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed to Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

Paul after his tarried there yet a good while, then took his leave of the brethren.

He stayed a year and a half altogether, according to Acts 18:11. The "brethren" would have included Silas and Timothy and all the believers they had won to Christ, since there is no mention of their going with Paul on his way home. It's likely that they stayed in Corinth to minister to the church there.

and sailed to Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.

He sailed towards Syria, but stopped in Ephesus on his way home.

having shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow.

Cenchrea is on the east side of the Isthmus of Corinth and is one of the major ports of the city. Paul and his friends would have taken ship from that port.

Concerning the vow, the pronouns “his” and “he” could refer to Aquila, because grammatically his name is mentioned last in the Greek sentence. There is nothing in the text that forces us to conclude that Paul is the one who took the vow, and commentators from all recent centuries, from Erasmus forward, are almost equally divided on whether Aquila or Paul had shaved his head, each side having strong arguments.

I [wd] agree with Gloag, who argues that it would have been contrary to Paul’s character to suppose that he was still so bound to Judaism that he would submit to the Nazarite. When he did so later, in Jerusalem, he regarded it as a matter of indifference, and he did so for a particular purpose.

Acts 18:19,20

And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

When they desired him to stay a longer time with them, he consented not;

Paul stayed for a while in Ephesus, teaching and debating in the synagogue. At most he stayed only a few weeks, perhaps only for one Sabbath (one ancient Greek manuscript reads “and the sabbath following he left them there”). His plans may have depended on the availability of shipping.

When Paul left Ephesus, continuing his journey to Antioch of Syria, Priscilla and Aquila decided to stay in Ephesus. We know that because they were in Ephesus when Apollos arrived there (Acts 18:24,26)

TOPIC: EPHEBUS

Acts 18:21

But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that comes in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

If Paul intended to be in Jerusalem for the Passover feast in the first part of April, then he would have had only a short time in Ephesus as winter shipping did not begin until about March 10. Favorable winds from the northwest would soon bring his ship to port in Caesarea.

Paul promises to return, in the will of God, which indeed he does a year or so later, and stays in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31).

Acts 18:22

And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

And when he had landed at Caesarea,

This was the city on the Palestinian coast about 65 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was called Caesarea Stratonis, because it was originally a Phoenician fort known as Strato’s Tower, built in the 4th century BC by a Sidonian king.

and gone up and saluted the church

Paul went “up” to Jerusalem, which was at a considerable elevation from the seaside. He spent some time there, having fellowship with all of the Christian believers, undoubtedly giving numerous reports of the activities of his missionary work, and teaching and being taught by the apostles in the Jerusalem church.

he went down to Antioch

It was “down” to Antioch, because of the much lower elevation of that city.

There is no mention here of what Jewish feasts Paul might have participated in, if any.

Acts 18:23

And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

After he had spent some time there, he departed

Paul spent a period of time in Antioch.

This marks the beginning of Paul's **third missionary journey**. Luke does not write anything about Paul's stay in Antioch, nor much about Paul's second visit to places where he had established churches. He only records details of his visits to new places of missionary activity.

We don't know the route he followed on his way to Ephesus, although we can be sure that he visited the churches he established during the first two journeys.

Also, we don't know who went with him on this trip. Silas was not his companion, but Timothy probably was. Timothy is spoken of a lot, both in Acts and in the Epistles, in connection with Paul's three years in Ephesus and his subsequent travels (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:20 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 16:21, Acts 20:4) Of course, he had several fellow workers in Ephesus, in addition to Aquila and Priscilla, including Erastus, Caius, and Aristarchus.

One specific objective was before him during the whole of this missionary journey, a collection for the relief of the poor Christians in Judea. Paul's steady pursuit of this object in the whole course of this journey may be traced through the following passages: 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8 and 9; Rom. 15:25,26; Acts 24:17.

It had been agreed, at the meeting of the Apostolic Council (Gal. 2:9, 10), that while some should go to the Heathen, and others to the Circumcision, the former should carefully remember the poor; and this we see Paul, on the present journey among the Gentile Churches, diligent to do. We even know the "order which he gave to the Churches of Galatia" (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). He directed that each person should lay by in store, on the first day of the week, according as God had prospered him, that the collection should be deliberately made, and prepared for an opportunity of being taken to Jerusalem.

Acts 18:24

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Acts 18:25

This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Apollos

Apollos was a well-educated man from the city of Alexandria in Egypt. He was well acquainted with the Old Testament scriptures and was familiar with John the Baptist's teachings. About A.D. 56 he came to Ephesus where he began to teach in the synagogue "the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John".

Aquila and his wife Priscilla were at the church in Ephesus and heard Apollos speaking. They took him aside and provided him with doctrinal teaching to bring him up to date about Christ, the Cross, the Resurrection, etc. After this, Apollos went to preach in Achaia, especially at Corinth, having been highly recommended by the Ephesian Christians. He was very effective in representing the claims of Christ to the Jews.

Acts 19:1 And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples,

In Corinth, Apollos was also very useful in "watering" the spiritual seed which Paul had planted. He was obviously a skilled teacher of Bible truth and much appreciated by the believers there. Unfortunately, many of the Corinthian believers became so attached to him that they produced a schism in the church, with some taking Apollos' part, some Paul's, and some staying out of the conflict. But it is obvious that Apollos did not encourage this party feeling, seen in the approving way Paul speaks of him and in the fact that Apollos did not want to return to Corinth when he was with Paul at Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:12).

1 Cor. 1:12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

1 Cor. 3:4-6 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not {mere} men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave {opportunity} to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

1 Cor. 3:22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,

1 Cor. 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

1 Cor. 16:12 But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

Paul mentions Apollos again in Titus 3:13 and recommends him and Zenas the lawyer to Titus, knowing that they intended to visit Crete.

Titus 3:13 Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them.

Jerome (a church father) believed that Apollos remained in Crete until he had heard that the divisions in Corinth had been healed, and that he returned and became bishop of that city.

Alexandria the birthplace of Apollos, was founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. Its palaces of the Ptolemies, its wonderful museum, its famed library, and its keenly intellectual populace of Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians made it one of the greatest intellectual and cultural centers of the Roman Empire.

The Septuagint version of the Old Testament (280 to 170 BC) was written at Alexandria, and here, during the first century, lived Philo Judaeus, a brilliant and devout Jew, whose

writings on the Logos were in certain respects similar to those of John the Beloved.

TOPIC: ALEXANDRIA

the baptism of John

[See the discussion of John's baptism in the topic "John the Baptist"]

TOPIC: JOHN THE BAPTIST, OUTLINE

Acts 18:26

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

That Apollos was well fitted for the task is indicated by his being a "learned man," "mighty in the scriptures," "fervent in spirit," "instructed in the way of the Lord" (vv 24f). His teaching was incomplete however, in that he knew "only the baptism of John" (v 25). In Alexandria, Apollos had heard, either directly or from others, of the preaching of John the Baptist at Bethany beyond Jordan (cf. Jn. 1:28).

Whatever he knew concerning the Messiah, Apollos continued to teach accurately. The drawback was that "he was acquainted only with the baptism of John." John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance, not a baptism of faith in Jesus Christ. Although Apollos accurately taught the facts about Jesus (his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection), he was not familiar with the work of the Holy Spirit, the progress of God's kingdom, and the way of God. In short, through oral teaching Apollos had learned the content of the gospel. But he had not grasped its significance and application.

Acts 18:27

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

Acts 18:28

For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

After some time had elapsed, Apollos expressed to the believers in Ephesus his desire to go to the province of Achaia (the Greek Peloponnesus) and its capital, Corinth (19:1). Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians indicates that in the course of time, the congregations of Corinth and Ephesus developed an enduring bond (I Cor. 16:19). We do not know much about the formation of the Ephesian church while Paul was absent. Yet Luke seems to indicate that Priscilla and Aquila, with the help of Apollos, had formed a nucleus of believers.²

Priscilla and Aquila had told Apollos about the spiritual growth of the church in Corinth. Together with the other believers in Ephesus, they encouraged him to visit the Christians in Achaia. They even asked the Corinthian believers to receive Apollos and to welcome him as a Christian brother. Correspondence among churches and individuals was common, as is evident from the letter of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23–29) and the numerous epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude and the epistle to the Hebrews.

Apollos used his knowledge of the Scriptures and his oratorical skills to strengthen the Christians in Corinth. As a result of his labors, the Corinthian church even had a faction known as the followers of Apollos (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4). Although he chides the Corinthians for the factions within the church, Paul speaks favorably about Apollos' work of teaching and preaching the Scriptures to Jews and Gentiles and of strengthening the churches in Achaia (1 Cor. 3:5–6; 4:6; 16:12).

In the absence of Paul, the Corinthian Jews seemed to gain influence among the Christians with their interpretation of the Scriptures. But

² The material in this section is from the Baker New Testament Commentary, Acts 18:27,28

when Apollos arrived, he publicly debated the Jews and proved from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. In God's providence, Apollos filled the place of Paul at Corinth, where he valiantly defended the Christian faith in the face of Jewish opposition. As Paul and Silas proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, so Apollos in their absence continued that glorious task.

Alexandria

from an article in the Thompson Chain Reference Bible.

Alexandria the birthplace of Apollos, was founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. Its palaces of the Ptolemies, its wonderful museum, its famed library, and its keenly intellectual populace of Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians made it one of the greatest intellectual and cultural centers of the Roman Empire.

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ALEXANDRIA – ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA

Arabic AL-ISKANDARIYAH city and urban muhafazah (governorate), Lower Egypt. Once the greatest city of the ancient world and a centre of Hellenic scholarship and science, Alexandria was the capital of Egypt from its founding by Alexander the Great in 332 BC to AD 642, when it was subdued by the Arabs. It is now the second largest city, the centre of a major industrial region, and the chief seaport of Egypt. It lies on the Mediterranean Sea at the western edge of the Nile River delta, about 114 miles (183 km) northwest of Cairo.

Alexandria has always occupied a special place in the popular imagination by virtue of its association with Alexander and with Mark Antony and Cleopatra. Alexandria also played a key role in passing on Hellenic culture to Rome and was a

centre of scholarship in the theological disputes over the nature of Christ's divinity that divided the early church. The legendary reputation of ancient Alexandria grew through a thousand years of serious decline following the Arab conquests, during which time virtually all traces of the Greco-Roman city disappeared. By the time Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, Alexandria had been reduced to a fishing village. The modern city and port that flourished on the back of the cotton boom in the 19th century has, therefore, little in common with the Alexandria of the past.

The free port status granted Alexandria by the Ottoman Turks accentuated the cultural ambivalence inherent in the city's location--extended along a spit of land with its back to Egypt and its face to the Mediterranean. This idea of a free city, open to all manner of men and ideas, was something the new Alexandria had in common with the old. It was a theme the Greek writer Constantine Cavafy, drawing heavily on its legendary past, developed in his poems of the city. This idea of Alexandria, and Cavafy's take on it in particular, was highlighted by the English writer Lawrence Durrell in his four-part novel, *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60).

THE CITY SITE

The modern city extends 25 miles (40 km) east to west along a limestone ridge, 1-2 miles (1.6-3.2 km) wide, that separates the salt lake of Maryut, or Mareotis--now partly drained and cultivated--from the Egyptian mainland. An hourglass-shaped promontory formed by the silting up of a mole (the Heptastadium), which was built soon after Alexandria's founding, links the island of Pharos with the city centre on the mainland. Its two steeply curving bays now form the basins for the Eastern Harbor and the Western Harbor.

The prevailing north wind, blowing across the Mediterranean, gives Alexandria a markedly different climate from that of the desert hinterland. The summers are relatively temperate, although humidity can build up in July and in August, the hottest month, when the average temperature reaches 87 °F (31 °C). Winters are cool and invariably marked by a series of violent storms

that can bring torrential rain and even hail. The mean daily temperature in January, which is the coldest month, is 64 °F (18 °C).

THE CITY PLAN

Designed by Alexander's personal architect, Dinocrates, the city incorporated the best in Hellenic planning and architecture. Within a century of its founding, its splendors rivaled anything known in the ancient world. The pride of ancient Alexandria and one of the Seven Wonders of the World was the great lighthouse, the Pharos of Alexandria, which stood on the eastern tip of the island of Pharos. Reputed to be more than 350 feet (110 meters) high, it was still standing in the 12th century. In 1477, however, the sultan Qa'it Bay used stones from the dilapidated structure to build a fort (named for him), which stands near or on the original site of the Pharos. In 1994 archaeologist Jean-Yves Empereur of the Centre for Alexandrian Studies (Centre d'Etudes Alexandrines) found many of the stones and some statuary that had belonged to the lighthouse in the waters off Pharos Island. The Egyptian government planned to turn the area into an underwater park to allow divers to see the archaeological remains of the lighthouse.

The Canopic Way (now Al-Hurriyah Avenue) was the principal thoroughfare of the Greek city, running east and west through its centre. Most of the Ptolemaic and, later, Roman monuments stood nearby. The Canopic Way was intersected at its western end by the Street of the Soma (now An-Nabi Danyal Street), along which is the legendary site of Alexander's tomb, thought to lie under the mosque An-Nabi Danyal. Close to this intersection was the Mouseion (museum), the city's academy of arts and sciences, which included the great Library of Alexandria. At the seaward end of the Street of the Soma were the two obelisks known as Cleopatra's Needles. These obelisks were given in the 19th century to the cities of London and New York. One obelisk can be viewed on the banks of the River Thames in London and the other in Central Park in New York City.

Between Al-Hurriyah Avenue and the railway station is the Roman Theatre, which was

uncovered in 1959 at the Kawm al-Dikkah archaeological site. At the southwestern extremity of the ancient city are the Kawm ash-Shuqafah burial grounds, with their remarkable Hadrianic catacombs dating from the 2nd century AD. Nearby, on the site of the ancient fort of Rakotis, is one of the few classical monuments still standing: the 88-foot- (27-metre-) high marble column known as Pompey's Pillar (actually dedicated to Diocletian soon after 297). Parts of the Arab wall, encompassing a much smaller area than the Greco-Roman city, survive on Al-Hurriyah Avenue, but the city contracted still further in Ottoman times to the stem of the promontory, now the Turkish Quarter. It is the oldest surviving section of the city, housing its finest mosques and worst slums.

The decline of the Ptolemies in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC was matched by the rise of Rome. Alexandria played a major part in the intrigues that led to the establishment of imperial Rome.

It was at Alexandria that Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies, courted Julius Caesar and claimed to have borne him a son. Her attempts at restoring the fortunes of the Ptolemaic dynasty, however, were thwarted by Caesar's assassination and her unsuccessful support of Mark Antony against Caesar's great-nephew Octavian. In 30 BC Octavian (later the emperor Augustus) formally brought Alexandria and Egypt under Roman rule. To punish the city for not supporting him, he abolished the Alexandrian Senate and built his own city at what was then the suburb of ar-Raml. Alexandria, however, could not be ignored, since it held the key to the Egyptian granary on which Rome increasingly came to rely; and the city soon regained its independence.

St. Mark, the traditional author of the second Synoptic Gospel, is said to have been preaching in Alexandria in the mid-1st century AD. Thenceforth, the city's growing Christian and Jewish communities united against Rome's attempts to impose official paganism. Periodic persecutions by various early emperors, especially by Diocletian beginning in 303, failed to subdue these communities; and, after the empire had

formally adopted Christianity under Constantine I, the stage was set for schisms within the church.

The first conflict that split the early church was between two Alexandrian prelates, Athanasius and Arius, over the nature of Christ's divinity. It was settled in 325 by the adoption of the Creed of Nicaea, which affirmed Christ's spiritual divinity and branded Arianism--the belief that Christ was lower than God--as heresy. Arianism, however, had many imperial champions, and this sharpened the conflict between the Alexandrian church and the state. In 391 Christians destroyed the Sarapeum, sanctum of the Ptolemaic cult and what Cleopatra had saved of the great Mouseion library. In 415 a Christian faction killed the Neoplatonist philosopher Hypatia, and Greek culture in Alexandria quickly declined.

After the ascendancy of the patriarchate of Constantinople--to which the see of Alexandria answered after the division of the Roman Empire in 364--the local church adopted Monophysitism (belief in the single nature and therefore physical divinity of Christ) as a way of asserting its independence. Although Monophysitism was rejected by the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Alexandrian church resisted Constantinople's attempts to bring it into line. An underground church developed to oppose the established one and became a focus of Egyptian loyalties. Disaffection with Byzantine rule created the conditions in which Alexandria fell first to the Persians, in 616, and then to the Arabs, in 642.

THE ISLAMIC PERIOD

The Arabs occupied Alexandria without resistance. Thenceforth, apart from an interlude in 645 when the city was briefly taken by the Byzantine fleet, Alexandria's fortunes were tied to the new faith and culture emanating from the Arabian Desert. Alexandria soon was eclipsed politically by the new Arab capital at al-Fustat (which later was absorbed into the modern capital, Cairo), and this city became the strategic prize for those wanting to control Egypt. Nevertheless, Alexandria continued to flourish as a trading centre, principally for textiles and luxury goods, as Arab influence expanded westward through North

Africa and then into Europe. The city also was important as a naval base, especially under the Fatimids and the Mamluks, but already it was contracting in size in line with its new, more modest status. The Arab walls (rebuilt in the 13th and 14th centuries and torn down in 1811) encompassed less than half the area of the Greco-Roman city.

Alexandria survived the early Crusades relatively unscathed, and the city came into its own again with the development of the East-West spice trade, which Egypt monopolized. The loss of this trade--which came about after the discovery of the sea route to India in 1498 and the Turkish conquest of Egypt in 1517--was the final blow to the city's fortunes. Under Turkish rule the canal linking Alexandria to the Rosetta branch of the Nile was allowed to silt up, strangling the city's commercial lifeline. Alexandria had been reduced to a small fishing village when Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798.

Alexandria, School of

the first Christian institution of higher learning, founded in the mid-2nd century AD in Alexandria, Egypt. Under its earliest known leaders (Pantaenus, Clement, and Origen), it became a leading centre of the allegorical method of biblical interpretation, espoused a rapprochement between Greek culture and Christian faith, and attempted to assert orthodox Christian teachings against heterodox views in an era of doctrinal flux. Opposing the School of Alexandria was the School of Antioch, which emphasized the literal interpretation of the Bible.

Ephesus

These materials on the history and geography of Ephesus were compiled from the following sources:

Unger, Merrill F., Bible Dictionary
Encyclopedia Britannica

Bean, G. E., "Aegean Turkey: An
Archaeological Guide"

Conybeare and Howson, "The Life and
Epistles of St. Paul"

Ephesus is the most important Greek city in Ionian Asia Minor; its ruins lie near the modern village of Selcuk in western Turkey (near the city of Izmir).

In Roman times it was situated on the northern slopes of the hills Coressus and Pion and south of the Cayster River, the silt from which has since formed a fertile plain but has caused the coastline to move ever farther west. The Temple of Artemis, or Diana, to which Ephesus owed much of its fame and which seems to mark the site of the classical Greek city, was probably on the seaboard when it was founded (about 600 BC), one mile east by northeast of Pion (modern Panayir Da{g hacek}). In Roman times a sea channel was maintained with difficulty to a harbor well west of Pion. By late Byzantine times this channel had become useless, and the coast by the mid-20th century was three miles farther west. Ephesus commanded the west end of one great trade route into Asia, that along the Cayster valley, and had easy access to the other two, along the Hermus (Gediz) and the Maeander (Büyükmeander) rivers.

History.

Ephesus enters history in the mid-7th century BC, when it was attacked by the Cimmerians. Unlike its neighbor, Magnesia, it survived the attacks. For part of the early 6th century the city was under tyrants. Though allied by marriage to the kings of Lydia, its people could not hold back the Lydian Croesus, who asserted a general suzerainty over the city. He did, however, present many columns and some golden cows for a new and splendid rebuilding of the Artemiseum (Temple of Artemis). At this time, according to Strabo, the Ephesians began to live in the plain; and to this period, too, should be allotted the redrafting of the laws, said to have been the work of an Athenian, Aristarchus.

Ephesus soon submitted to Cyrus of Persia. Early in the Ionian revolt (499-493 BC) against the Persians, Ephesus served as a base for an Ionian attack on Sardis; but it is not mentioned

again until 494, when the Ephesians massacred the Chiot survivors of the Battle of Lade. The massacre may have occurred because Ephesus was a commercial rival of the chief rebels, Chios and Miletus. Ephesus maintained friendly relations with Persia for about 50 years: in 478 Xerxes, returning from his failure in Greece, honored Artemis of Ephesus, although he sacked other Ionian shrines, and left his children for safety in Ephesus; and Themistocles landed there in the 460s on his flight to Persia. But after 454 Ephesus appears as a regular tributary of Athens. Great Ephesians up to this time had been Callinus, the earliest Greek elegist (mid-7th century BC), the satirist Hipponax, and the famous philosopher Heraclitus, one of the Basilids.

Ephesus shared in a general revolt of 412 BC against Athens, siding with Sparta in the Second Peloponnesian War, and remained an effective ally of Sparta down to the end of the war. Threatened by Persia after 403, Ephesus served in 396 as the headquarters of King Agesilaus of Sparta. In 394 the Ephesians deserted to Conon's anti-Spartan maritime league, but by 387 the city was again in Spartan hands and was handed by Antalcidas to Persia. There followed the pro-Persian tyranny of Syrrhax and his family, who were stoned to death in 333 on Alexander the Great's taking the city.

After 50 years of fluctuating fortune, Ephesus was conquered by the Macedonian general Lysimachus and resettled around Coressus and Pion (286-281 BC). Lysimachus introduced colonists from Lebedus and Colophon and renamed the city after his wife, Arsinoe--a name soon dropped. This was the beginning of Ephesus' Hellenistic prosperity. It became conspicuous for the abundance of its coinage.

After the defeat of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, by the Romans in 189 BC, Ephesus was handed over by the conquerors to the king of Pergamum. Attalus III of Pergamum bequeathed Ephesus with the rest of his possessions to the Roman people (133 BC). Thenceforth, Ephesus remained subject to Rome, except for a brief time beginning in 88

BC, when, at the instigation of Mithridates the Great of Pontus, the cities of Asia Minor revolted and killed their Roman residents.

The Ephesians even killed those Romans who had fled for refuge to the Artemiseum; notwithstanding which they returned in 86 BC to their former masters. Their claim, preserved on an extant inscription, that in admitting Mithridates they had merely yielded to superior force was rudely brushed aside by Sulla, who inflicted a very heavy fine. Although it twice chose the losing side in the Roman civil wars and although it was stoutly opposed by Pergamum and Smyrna, Ephesus became under Augustus the first city of the Roman province of Asia. The geographer Strabo wrote of its importance as a commercial centre in the 1st century BC. The triumphal arch of 3 BC and the aqueduct of AD 4-14 initiated that long series of public buildings, ornamental and useful, that make Ephesus the most impressive example in Greek lands of a city of imperial times.

Meanwhile the Christian Church began to win converts. A famous protest in the theatre against the teachings of St. Paul, described in Acts 19, is dated about AD 57. According to local belief Ephesus was the last home of the Virgin, who was lodged near the city by St. John and died there. The tradition that St. Luke also died there seems to be less strongly supported. Ephesus was one of the seven churches of Asia to which the Revelation to John was addressed.

The Goths destroyed both city and temple in AD 262, and neither ever recovered its former splendour. The emperor Constantine, however, erected a new public bath, and Arcadius rebuilt at a higher level the street from the theatre to the harbor, named after him, the Arkadiane. A general council of the church, held at Ephesus in 431 in the great double church of St. Mary, condemned Nestorius and justified the cult of the Virgin as Theotokos (Mother of God). A few years later, according to legend, the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (a group of 3rd-century Christian martyrs) were miraculously raised from the dead. They too became the object of a famous cult. The emperor Justinian built the

magnificent basilica of St. John in the 6th century. By the early Middle Ages, the city was no longer useful as a port and fell into decline; late Byzantine Ephesus, conquered by the Seljuqs in 1090, was merely a small town. After brief splendour in the 14th century, even this was deserted, and the true site of the Artemiseum remained unsuspected until 1869.

Excavations and extant remains.

J.T. Wood, working at Ephesus for the British Museum between 1863 and 1874, excavated the odeum and theatre. In May 1869 he struck a corner of the Artemiseum. His excavation exposed to view not only the scanty remains of the latest edifice (built after 350 BC) but the platform below it of an earlier temple of identical size and plan subsequently found to be that of the 6th century BC, to which Croesus contributed. The sculptured fragments of both temples were sent to the British Museum. In 1904 D.G. Hogarth, heading another mission from the museum, examined the earlier platform and found beneath its centre the remains of three yet older structures. In its earliest known phase the temple was apparently a small platform of green schist, containing a sealed deposit of primitive coins and other objects. These date from c. 600 BC.

It is impossible to assign the various architects named by ancient authors to the respective phases of the temple. At best, Chersiphron and Metagenes can be tentatively assigned to the Temple of Croesus, Chirocrates or Dinocrates to that of the 4th century. There had perhaps been some repairs toward 400 BC, associated with the architects Paeonius and Demetrius and with the prize-winning dedicatory hymn of the famous musician Timotheus.

The Artemiseum passed rapidly through three phases before c. 550 BC. The Temple of Croesus (the fourth phase) was remarkable for its great size (it was more than 300 feet long and 150 feet wide), for the carved figures around the lower drums of its columns, and for the smaller but elaborate figured friezes along its roof

gutter. Croesus' temple seems to have been burned down in 356 BC.

Lysimachean Ephesus has been continuously excavated since 1894 by the Austrian Archaeological Institute, but so solid and extensive is the Roman town that by the early 1960s the Austrians had rarely penetrated to Hellenistic levels.

On the hill of Ayasoluk (Hagios Theologos) is Justinian's church of St. John the Theologian, built around a shrine variously associated in the early Middle Ages with the death or bodily assumption of St. John. The church, uncovered since 1922, is a noble structure but badly restored. On the hill there is also a beautiful Seljuq mosque dedicated in 1375.

The public buildings of the city are arranged in a rectangular street pattern going back to Hellenistic days. They include the theatre, capable of seating nearly 25,000 spectators and completed in its present form under Trajan; the agora (marketplace), surrounded by stoas (sheltered promenades), dating from the time of Severus; the library of Celsus, also Trajanic and well known because of its facade; and an immense array of baths and gymnasiums.

All these buildings are to the west of Pion. On its north side is the stadium and north of this the gymnasium of Publius Veditus Antoninus, relatively small but very complete and with a notable chapel for the cult of Antoninus Pius. South of Pion were the odeum--another gift of Veditus--a roofed semicircular theatre to hold 1,400 persons; also a series of fountains and aqueducts, notably the aqueduct of Gaius Sextilius Pollio, which crossed the valley from Coressus.

Of the early Byzantine city, besides the stretch of curtain wall on Panajir Dag, there remain the ruined church of the Seven Sleepers to its east and the long double basilica of the Virgin, the scene of the council, to its west. This basilica was rebuilt several times; it was largely around this building, between the great gymnasiums and the stadium of the classical city, that the early Byzantine Ephesians gathered.

John the Baptist

from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Sources

For trustworthy information concerning the life and work of John the Baptist we must go to the NT and Josephus. The Synoptic Gospels tell of his origin, ministry, message, and death. The Fourth Gospel focuses on his relation to Jesus. Josephus (*Antiquities* xviii.5.2 [116–19]) reports his popularity, relation to Herod Antipas, and death.

Parentage

Although in his ministry John was widely recognized as “a real prophet” (Mark 11:32), he was of priestly descent (as were Jeremiah and Ezekiel). His mother Elizabeth was one “of the daughters of Aaron” and his father was a priest “of the division of Abijah” (Luke 1:5), one of twenty-four divisions that took turns serving in the temple at Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 24:10). “They were both righteous before God ... had no child ... and both were advanced in years” (Luke 1:6f). Their home was in “the hill country of Judea” (Luke 1:65).

Early Life

Luke 1:36 indicates that John was born about six months before Jesus, whose birth cannot be dated later than early in 4 B.C. This suggests that John, like Jesus, began his ministry when he was about thirty years old (cf. Luke 3:23). His father, an upright priest, lived in the hill country of Judea near the Qumrân sect, which was located in the wilderness of Judea near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. This community had as its nucleus earnest priests who expected God to act soon to establish His rule. It has been suggested that Zechariah was in sympathy with the Qumrân group, and that when he and his wife died - both were already old when John was born - John was brought up at Qumrân and there was taught that the Scriptures promised God’s early action to judge and redeem His people. What is clear is that

“the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness [of Judea] till the day of his manifestation to Israel” (Luke 1:80). It was a period of silence, study, thought, and preparation.

Ministry

John was still in the wilderness of Judea when “the word of God” called him to preach (Luke 3:2), and there in the wilderness he began his ministry (Mt. 3:1). This wilderness included not only the wild rocky region west of the Dead Sea but also the lower region of the Jordan Valley. At first John preached in the Jordan Valley just N of the Dead Sea; John 1:28 places part of this ministry at Bethany beyond Jordan, which may be located E of Jericho on the east bank of the Jordan River, perhaps in the Wādī el-Kharrār. But John moved about; John 3:23 speaks of a later ministry at Aenon near Salim, which may have been in Samaria, a few miles E of Jacob’s Well, or further N, a few miles S of Scythopolis. At the end of his ministry he must have been either in Galilee or (probably) Perea, for Herod Antipas, who arrested him, ruled only these regions.

Luke 3:1f gives an elaborate dating for the beginning of John’s ministry. For Luke this event was important not only because John’s prophetic ministry was influential but also because it heralded the new decisive action of God. The date cannot have been before A.D. 26, when Pilate became governor of Judea (cf. also John 2:20), nor later than A.D. 28, for Jesus’ ministry must have begun by then.

John dressed in rough garb, and ate the simple food available in the wilderness (Mark 1:6); the leather girdle recalls the dress of Elijah (2 KINGS 1:8), and may suggest that John was conscious of a call to a ministry like that of Elijah. He did not go to Jerusalem or any city, but stayed in the wilderness and preached in the open. For his baptism he wanted running water, which was one factor in determining where he preached, and John 1:28; 3:23 indicate that he preached where people passed by and he could easily be found. To fulfill his

God-given mission he lived a life of stern hardship. That “John came neither eating nor drinking” (Matt. 11:18) is a dramatic way of describing his simple, self-denying way of life.

His preaching made no mention of ceremonial or priestly requirements. He addressed it to Jews (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8), and announced the imminent coming of the messianic age, “the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 3:2). He made no claim to be the Messiah, and even denied being Elijah (Mal. 4:5) or the prophet (Deut. 18:15); he was simply the warning “voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Mark 1:3; Luke 3:15f; John 1:20–23).

The warning was urgent, for preliminary to the coming of God’s final kingdom would be stern judgment, carried out by One mightier than John; it would bring blessing to those ready, but the fire of devastating judgment to the wicked (Mt. 3:11f; Luke 3:16f). And instead of delivering the Jews from the foreign oppressor and honoring them, it would strike Israel first of all. Descent from Abraham would be no protection; Jews as well as Gentiles were sinners.

The only escape was to repent, turn from sin, and change one’s entire attitude and way of life. Those who did this and were baptized received forgiveness. But the repentance had to be real and thorough; the repentant person had to “bear fruits that befit repentance” (Luke 3:8). All must share their goods and food, tax collectors must be honest, and soldiers must refrain from extortion and be content with their pay (Luke 3:10–14).

John’s method and message were urgent. He had no time for long discussions. Whether he addressed his warning of imminent judgment to “the multitudes” generally (Luke 3:7), or particularly to “the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt. 3:7), it was a stern, fiery, fearless warning of imminent doom from which escape was possible only by prompt and genuine repentance matched by thorough obedience to God’s will.

Baptism

Though John was a prophet and gave no teaching requiring ceremonial priestly practices, he gave such prominence to baptism that his distinguishing title was “the Baptist” (ho baptistés, Mt. 3:1; etc.) or “the Baptizer” (ho baptízōn, only in Mark 1:4; 6:14, 24), and his message was called “a baptism of repentance” (Mark 1:4). This distinctive rite, evidently administered in the running water of the Jordan River (Mark 1:5) or at springs (John 3:23), was a symbolic expression of John’s message.

Origin

The practice of ceremonial baths and washings was common throughout the ancient world, and persistent search has been made for the background that best explains why John gave baptism so prominent a place. Various washings were prescribed in the Mosaic law to remove defilement and infection and restore the normal clean state (Lev. 11–15). The messianic promises of the OT mention “a fountain opened for the house of Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1); God was to “sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness” and receive “a new heart” and “a new spirit” (Ezekiel 36:25f).

By the time John began to preach, the Jews were requiring of proselytes from the gentile world not only circumcision but also baptism. This proselyte baptism was regarded as a cleansing from the ceremonial defilement that in Jewish eyes affected every Gentile. Frequent washings also were known among Jews. Josephus went into the wilderness and spent some time with Banus, an ascetic who “bathed himself in cold water frequently”. Josephus also reported that the Essenes “bathe their bodies in cold water”. The Qumrân Scrolls contain references to ritual lustrations, and some think that the reservoirs found at Qumrân attest frequent lustrations.

The Jewish community at Qumrân probably was an Essene or Essene-type community, but it

is doubtful that there was repeated ritual washing in such rather small reservoirs. In any case, a single initiatory baptism or bath is not attested at Qumrân, though no doubt some ritual washings were carried out there by this Jewish sect.

None of these ancient practices really explains the origins of John's baptism. They show only that such a baptism would not have seemed strange in the ancient Near Eastern world, and they give clues to what John's baptism meant to the Jews; but his baptism was something new.

Significance

This baptism was administered but once to a person, and thus differed from the repeated washings so widely practiced. It was administered to Jews and so differed from proselyte baptism of Gentiles. It was not accompanied or immediately followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so was not a full parallel to Christian baptism; John only promised the gift of the Spirit at some future time.

John's baptism had an eschatological focus. God's decisive action was imminent; judgment would strike all sinners, including unprepared Jews. Earnest repentance, divine forgiveness, and complete change of life were urgently necessary to escape judgment and enter the coming kingdom (Mt. 3:10; Luke 3:9). Baptism was for penitent Jews, who thereby confessed their sins, renounced their old way of life, received forgiveness, dedicated themselves to a loyal and upright life, and looked expectantly for the coming of God's Mightier One to establish the divine kingdom. Contrary to Josephus (Ant. xviii.5.2 [117f]), it was not merely for physical cleansing; it symbolized the spiritual cleansing and renewal of the repentant and reformed sinner.

Baptism of Jesus

It is historical fact that Jesus was baptized by John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say so, and John 1:31–33 implies it. But John baptized repentant sinners. Did Jesus confess personal sin? The NT

rejects such an idea. Mt. 3:13–15 explains why He asked to be baptized: "to fulfill all righteousness." This means not that it was a hollow form to Him, but that He was so loyal a member of His people and so identified with them that He had to join with them in their confession and dedication (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

Imprisonment and Death

The exact date of John's imprisonment cannot be determined, but it occurred before Jesus returned to Galilee to open His ministry there (Mark 1:14), and so ca A.D. 28. The length of imprisonment is likewise uncertain. Since John died before Jesus' ministry ended (Mark 6:14–29), it occurred not later than A.D. 29. Josephus reports a defeat of Herod Antipas in A.D. 36 which people thought was divine retribution on Herod for executing John (Ant. xviii.5.2 [116f]). This might suggest a date later than A.D. 29. But John clearly died before Jesus did, and the story Josephus tells simply shows how deeply John impressed the people and how vividly they remembered him seven years after his death.

According to Josephus, Herod Antipas feared that John by his fiery preaching might stir up a revolt, so he seized him, imprisoned him at Machaerus E of the Dead Sea, and had him put to death. In the Gospels John's rebuke of Herod for marrying his brother's wife Herodias caused Herod to arrest him (Mark 6:17f; Mt. 14:3f; Luke 3:19f). Quite possibly both explanations contain truth. Herod's fear of political results from John's preaching would explain the imprisonment; the scheming of Herodias explains best the extreme step of executing John by beheading him.

John the Baptist's Disciples

Most hearers of John, even those baptized, returned home after a time; but some became his disciples and lived as a group under his leadership. Even after his imprisonment they kept in touch with him; once a group of them came to Jesus with a question from him (Mt. 11:2; Luke 7:19). Later, when John was executed, they buried his body and reported his

death to Jesus. As during his ministry, they followed his teaching, fasted regularly (Mark 2:18), and prayed as he had taught them (Luke 11:1).

Little is known of their continuing work. Their loyalty to him during his imprisonment shows that they continued to live as his disciples. About twenty-five years later, when Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus, "he knew only the baptism of John," though he knew the OT prophecies of Jesus or some facts about Jesus' earthly life (Acts 18:25). Did he learn of John's message and baptism in Alexandria or in Jerusalem?

At least the incident shows that John's movement continued and spread. The twelve men at Ephesus who had not heard of the Holy Spirit but had been baptized into John's baptism (Acts 19:1-7) are further evidence of this. The pointed insistence in John 1:20; 3:28 that John was not the Messiah but had directed men to Jesus indicates that when the Fourth Gospel was written, probably late in the 1st cent. A.D., John's movement still continued, especially in Asia Minor, and some of his followers were claiming that John was the promised messianic leader. Some but by no means all of John's followers became followers of Jesus (Mt. 14:12?; John 1:35-42).

John and Jesus

Though many of John's followers gave John a rank superior to Jesus, John himself clearly claimed a preparatory and secondary role. He was sent by God but was subordinate to the Mightier One to come, and so could only hold the center of the stage for a limited time. His task was to proclaim the imminent coming of God's righteous kingdom and to call his hearers to repent and be baptized to escape the impending judgment and find a place in that kingdom. He announced the coming of the Mightier One, who would execute God's judgment, establish God's perfect order, and bestow the Holy Spirit on God's loyal people.

Matthew 3:14 suggests that John knew clearly that Jesus was the Greater One, and in John

1:29, 33, 36 John explicitly identifies Jesus as the Greater One, the Lamb of God, and the Son of God. But in Mt. 11:2f and Luke 7:19 John sends from prison to ask Jesus if He is the Coming One, and Peter is said to have expressed a new, God-given revelation when at the end of the Galilean ministry he identifies Jesus as the Messiah (Mt. 16:17). These two groups of evidence are not contradictory.

John sensed the greatness in Jesus without explicitly and immediately grasping and stating the full Christian gospel; the Fourth Gospel, in which men ascribe explicitly to Jesus in the first week of His ministry every great title the gospel story will contain, legitimately dramatizes the essential meaning of John's message and relation to Jesus without waiting for it to become clear, as it does in the other Gospels, in the ongoing development of His ministry.

The Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel are in essential agreement. The latter's concern is always to bring out the full meaning of the story; John the Baptist had really pointed to Jesus without fully understanding what God was doing through him. Hence John's followers could think that they were true to him by continuing his independent movement, while the disciples of Jesus could rightly claim that they had grasped the final meaning of John's preaching and attitude.

Jesus' estimate of John was both positive and reserved. By coming to hear John preach and by being baptized Jesus recognized John's God-given mission. To Jesus, John was a true prophet of God, and more; he was Elijah who had come to prepare for God's final judgment and redemption (Mal. 4:5; Mt. 11:9-14). No greater man had lived. John's message and baptism, Jesus held, were as surely prompted by God as was His own ministry (Mark 11:27-33). "Yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11), for John did not fully grasp the whole gospel and did not disband his followers when Jesus appeared, but continued to preach independently about the coming crisis, divine judgment, and the need of repentance and

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baptism. John prepared the way; the kingdom began to come in the ministry and work of Jesus. John had been divinely sent and was not repudiated, but once Jesus appeared John had to decrease while Jesus increased (John 3:30).
