

LESSON - 30

THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (A. D. 54 - 58)

References: Acts. 18 :23 - 21 ;16

Memory Verse: Acts. 20: 24 - 27

Objective: To be convinced that oppositions and adversities can never hinder God's work. An exemplary missionary needs to have his vision always before him in the midst of trying circumstances.

Introduction: Which were the places visited by Paul in his second missionary journey ? Recollect some of the important events. Take special note of the starting points as well as terminating points of each journey. Is there any difference between the first and the second journeys? During the third missionary journey, he revisited some former places he had already visited. But Ephesus was in his top priority. The Churches in Asia Minor are very much related to Ephesus. Paul stayed over there and ministered three years. Let's study about the main events and the epistles written during the third missionary journey as well as the return trip.

1. THE SPECIALITIES OF THIS JOURNEY:

While both the former journeys terminated at Antioch, this journey terminates at Jerusalem. Unlike the former journeys, Paul took longer time to stay for ministry in one place at Ephesus during this journey. Four of his most famous epistles (1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans) were written during this journey.

2. THE CHURCHES IN ASIA MINOR RE- VISITED

Not very long after the second missionary journey, Paul got ready

for the third. towards the close of the second journey, Paul had paid a short visit to Ephesus. He had left Ephesus hoping to return if the Lord willed. Thus Paul had Ephesus as the first reference in his mind. However, he visited Churches at Galatia and Phrygia systematically. Probably, this visit had included the Churches planted during the first journey too. While visiting those Churches, he instructed them to take a collection for the sake of the poor believers at Jerusalem (1 Cori. 16: 1,2).

IN ASIA:

This Asia is neither the continental Asia nor Asia Minor but a province on the south east of Asia Minor. The 7 Churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Tyathira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea were in this province of Asia. Besides these seven, there were other Churches also in this province like Colosse, Hierpolis, Miletus etc. But Ephesus, was the central place of Asia. Paul had great desire already on his second tour to visit this place, a centre of Paganism, Superstitions, sorcery etc. (Act. 16:6). But then the Holy Spirit had prevented him. Since the place was ripe and ready for the gospel now, Paul was allowed to go this time.

THE CITY OF EPHEBUS:

This city was situated on the bank of the river Kaister near the Mediteranean sea. This was linked by roads to all cities of the provincial Asia. The fame of Ephesus lay in the fact that the Temple of the goddess Artames, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world was here. The festival of Artames which fell in May attracted large crowds from all over Asia. The idol of Artames was believed to have been fallen from heaven. People in Ephesus made small models of the idol of Artames and of the temple. Thousands of people earned their livelihood by making and selling idols. Besides there was an arena with a capacity of 50 thousand spectators. In brief, Ephesus was an immoral city being the centre of idolatry, revelries and sorcery.

THE FOUNDATION LAID:

Towards the close of the second Journey as Paul went to Ephesus, he had left the Aquilas couples back there. While Aquilas and Prescilla were working there, an enthusiastic precacher and scholar named Apollos reached there. He was a man with thorough knowledge

of the way of the Lord and spoke the word of God with great power. Apollos was a disciple of John and knew only the baptism of repentance. But Aquilas and Priscilla imparted the accurate knowlege of the scriptures to him and he accepted it.

THE DISCIPLES AT EPHEBUS:

Meanwhile, Paul went about visiting the Churches already established and came to Ephesus. There Paul first met a group of disciples numbering twelve. Probably they were the converts of Apollos. Like Apollos, these men also knew only the baptism of John. The baptism of John was that of repentance and required faith in the coming Messiah. What is the difference between Johns baptism and Christian baptism? Christian baptism is to become partakers of the death and resurection of Jesus Christ. Hence the faith on Christ who has already come (Rom 6: 1-11). Prior to the death of Christ, John's baptism was acceptable. But John's baptism was done away with and the Christian baptism was introduced by the apostles on the basis of the death of Christ (Mtt. 28: 18- 20). Paul asked a question to the disciples of Ephesus. Did you recieve the Holy Spirit after you believed? From this we understand that in the first century, everyone was expected to have the annointing of the Holy Spirit. Its importance is clear by the fact that Paul's very first question prefered the experience of the Holy Spirit to anything else. Their replay was very interesting: " We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit". The next query of Paul was: "Well , then, what kind of baptism did you receive?" This makes the names used at baptism very clear to us. Baptism is to be given in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit. For so did Jesus Christ command us (Mtt. 28: 18, 19). The stantement is that the disciples at Ephesus were bapised in the name of Jesus Christ. The phrase is used to distinguish the baptism of New Testament from the baptism of John. After baptism, Paul the apostle prayed for them. Then they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke in tongues. (19:6).

THE WORK AT EPHEBUS:

With the above said ministry, Paul began his work at Ephesues. For the next three months he preached in the Jewish Synagogue. Aquilas and Priscilla were fellow workers with Paul in the ministry here too. See how intimate their relationship was (Rom. 16: 3, 4). Afterwards Paul was denied freedom in the synagogues as always was the case with him. So Paul left them and rented a big school building or lecture

hall of Tyrannus. He used this place as his auditorium for the next two years for public address, which he did daily. In addition to this, Paul performed the ministry of evangelism with individuals in streets, houses etc. Meanwhile, Paul worked with his own hands to provide for him and his companions (20: 34). The continuous labour for about 3 years made Paul physically very weak. Persecutions also weakened his health very much. 2 Cori 11:1, 1 Cori. 15: 31 32.

THE LORD HELPED PAUL IN THE MINISTRY IN MAINLY TWO WAYS:

i) In strengthening Paul ii) In performing unusual miracles through him (19; 10-12). The unsurmountable power of the Gospel shattered the big strongholds of satan there. Those who practised magic brought their scrolls and burnt them (19: 19- 20). It cost about fifty thousand silver coins (about thirty thousand rupees). The seven sons of a certain Jewish High priest, who practised magic arts tried to imitate Paul in casting out demons. The result was that the demon overpowered the and hurt them, so that they ran home naked and wounded (19: 13-16). By these instances also the name of the Lord was held in high honour and spread as well.

As the result of the three years work, it happened that Churches arose not only in Ephesus but in all the principal cities of Asia. The Churches at Colosse and elsewhere were result of Paul's work while at Ephesus although he had never visited those places. Those people who came to Ephesus, a centre for religion and commerce, were attracted by the miracles and signs and came to the hall of Tyrannus to listen to Gods Word. They got converted and returned to their respective areas as Christian missionaries. Thus it happened that Ephesus once a centre for religious supersition, idolatry, and demon's worship, became a Gospel centre. It was at Ephesus that Paul wrote the first epistle to Corinthians. The epistle was written in answer to their letter regarding certain matters as well as information that reached Paul through other sources. The purpose of writing this letter was to settle the dirorders that crept into the Church. The letter was sent through Titus, his fellow worker.

PAUL LEAVES EPHEBUS:

At the close of the work at Ephesus, Paul made pain to visit Macedonia, Greece, Jerusalem, Fome etc. (19; 21, 22). As he got the

door opened for a better work, he decided to stay in Ephesus a little longer (I Cori. 16: 8,9) But about this time, there was a great riot in Ephesus. The cause was a religious blindedness mingled with superstition and selfishness (19: 23-27). How easily are people stirred up under the guile of religious faith! In spite of such uproar in the city over the apostles, see how bravely and wisely Paul tackled up the situation.

Soon after this riot, Paul exhorted the Church and left Ephesus. From there he reached Macedonia first (Probably Philippi) 20: 1-2).

There in Macedonia Paul heard from Titus what impact his first letter to Corinthian Church had made, and he wrote the second letter and sent it through Titus, (2 Cori. 7: 4- 2; 8: 16-24).

Then he came to Greece and Corinth, where he stayed three months. It was from here that Paul wrote his notable epistles namely Galatians and Romans (Act. 20 : 2, 3; Rom 16: 1,23).

RETURNS:

Paul came back to Macedonia. There Luke rejoins the party (See 20: 5). From Philippi, they reached Troas by ship. In the second journey, what was the episode at Troas? He had the vision of Macedonian Call (16: 6- 10). This time at Troas, another important event occurred, i. e., the raising of a dead man (20: 7- 12). From Troas, they travelled 200 miles and reached Miletus. There Paul gathered the elders from Ephesus and made a very heart- touching sermon to them. If we read his sermon, we can learn how exemplary he was in his manner of life and how faithful he was in his ministry (20; 17- 35). Specially take note of his farwell (20: 36-38).

From Miletus, Paul left for Jerusalem (21: 1-16). He set sail about 200 miles and reached a place called Patara. Sailing further about 400 miles he reached Tyre, where he spent seven days with the brothers.

AT THE HOUSE OF PHILIP THE EVANGELIST:

From Tyre, he travelled a foot 55 miles and reached Caesarea. There was the house of Philip who had been chosen to be one for serving at the table, Who was also responsible for the revival of Samaria. Paul stayed in the hosue of Philip. Philip's four unmarried daughter were propheteses. After they had been at Philip's house a prophet named Agabus came from Judea and predicetd about Paul's coming

sufferings at Jerusalem. (Acts. 21: 4, 11). Least worrying about his forthcoming suffering he decided to face bravely what would happen to him. He followed the footsteps of his beloved Master who made up his mind to go to Jerusalem to be crucified (Lk. 9.51). Paul counted it to be a blessing to die for the Lord.

Travelling 64 miles by land from Caesarea, Paul reached Jerusalem. He testified to the brothers there all the wonderful things that the Lord did through and for him. Thus ended the third missionary journey of a duration of four years.

EXERCISE - 30

Answer the following questions

1. What were the specialties of Paul's 3rd missionary journey?
2. How many epistles did Paul write during his 3rd missionary journey? Which are they?
3. Name the Churches in the province of Asia?
4. Who was the preacher and Scholar who preached the baptism of repentance at Ephesus?
5. What is the difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism?
6. In Whose name should baptism be given?
7. In Ephesus, which place did Paul choose for his public address for three years?
8. In which two ways did God help Paul during his ministry?
9. In Whose house did Paul stay at Caesarea?
10. Which prophet predicted about Paul's sufferings at Jerusalem?
11. What was the duration of Paul's 3rd Missionary journey?

