

## Acts 18:18-23

Gallio's decision of Acts 18:15-17 set a legal precedent

1 Thessalonians was written from Corinth in 51 AD

2 Thessalonians was written from Corinth in 52 AD

Paul leaves Corinth in the spring of 52 AD

Silas and Timothy were left in Corinth to lead the church in Achaia and continue to assist Macedonia.

Paul leaves Corinth with Priscilla and Aquila (and, Luke) it seems with the intention of beginning a work in Ephesus. Paul had tried to reach Ephesus in Acts 16:6.

Paul will have hair cut in Cenchrea for the completion of a vow.

Paul will sail to Ephesus, visit the synagogue, promise to return, appoint Priscilla/Aquila to Ephesus and leave for Jerusalem.

Paul sails for Caesarea and travels to Jerusalem to greet the church in Jerusalem.

Paul was likely in Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost in the spring of 52 AD

In Jerusalem Paul would have fulfilled his vow taken while in Corinth and completed in Cenchrea

Paul then moves north to his home church in Antioch, Syria.

Then Paul travels from Syria through Galatia and Phrygia finally arriving at Ephesus.

**Acts 18:18** – “Hair cut” – the time of Paul's personal vow and special consecration has come to an end when he leaves Corinth and while he is in Cenchrea.

- Nazarite vow is detailed in Numbers 6:1-21
- Rabbinic literature elaborated and developed this vow
- It was common for a person to take a Nazarite vow
- A fixed period of time such as 30 days would be established
- A true Nazarite vow, if made while in a foreign country, required residence in the land of Israel for at least 30 days
- Vow included abstaining from wine, leaving hair uncut, avoiding dead bodies and other things/activities that would make the person unclean
- At the conclusion of the fixed period of time the hair was shaved and brought to Jerusalem as an offering. According to Numbers 6:8 the hair was burnt.
- The person would also make a sacrifice

Paul's vow would appear to have involved Corinth:

- Paul's vow may have been in response to the vision in Acts 18:9 as thanksgiving
- The vow may have been response to the struggle in Corinth, the opposition/danger faced in Corinth or it may have been in response to the success Paul had in Corinth

Cenchrea

- Eastern port city for Corinth
- There was a church in Cenchrea that must have been planted in 51-52 AD while Paul was in Corinth.
- Phoebe, a deaconess from the church of Cenchrea, carried Paul's letter to the church in Rome that Paul wrote while he was in Corinth in 57 AD (Romans 16:1)



## Acts 18:19

Paul was received well in Ephesus. They begged him to stay or to return  
Aquila and Priscilla were left by Paul in Ephesus where they established a home, started a business, began a ministry and formed a church in their home.

**Acts 18:22-23** – Paul covers 1,500 miles in these verses recorded by Luke. Then in 19:1 Paul heads back to Ephesus.

**Acts 18:22-19:1** covers about one year. Paul returns to Ephesus by land through Galatia and Phrygia to visit the churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe.

## Acts 18:24-28

- Aquilla and Priscilla are in Ephesus
- Timothy and Silas are in Greece (Corinth) and Macedonia (Thessalonica)
- Paul is in Syria
- Apollos
  - Comes to speak in the Ephesian Synagogue
  - Articulate orator (eloquent)
  - From Alexandria, Egypt
  - Well trained in speaking
  - Educated in the Old Testament
  - Believes (though knowledge is limited) in Jesus as the Messiah
  - Lacking knowledge of:
    - Jesus' complete teaching
    - Resurrection
    - NT revelation
    - The Holy Spirit
  - Welcomes Aquilla and Priscilla's teaching and information

## Alexandria

- On the Mediterranean Coast of Egypt
- Founded in 331 by Alexander the Great
- Became capital of Egypt
- Replaced Athens as the cultural and education center of Greek philosophy and Hellenism
- 328 foot high lighthouse on the island of Pharos in front of Alexandria's two man-made harbors was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
- Large Jewish community with extensive education and many, many synagogues
- This is where the Septuagint (LXX) was translated from Hebrew into Greek
- Philo was from Alexandria. He wrote extensively combining the OT with Greek philosophy
- Christianity obviously started here quickly.
- By 150 AD Alexandria was the center of Gnosticism.
- Origen was born here in 184 AD, raised by Christian parents who suffered persecution. Origen revised the Christian school in Alexandria in the early 200's AD.



## **Acts 18:27**

Aquila and Priscilla tell Apollos about the Corinthian church which had trouble with the synagogue and was filled with Greek believers.

Apollos wants to go to Achaia and get involved

Apollos' ministry there in Corinth will have a large impact on Jews who will eventually join the Corinthian church.

Apollos uses his rhetorical skills to make ground with the Greeks and their philosophical background Paul supports Apollos and urged him to return to Corinth while Apollos was ministering alongside Paul in Ephesus. See 1 Cor. 16:12 – ***“Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.”***

## **Acts 19:1-7 - EPHEBUS**

Paul spends 3 years in Ephesus. Compare this with 18 months in Corinth.

Ephesus is a port city in 52 AD

The great Temple of Artemis is in Ephesus. It is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Artemis is the official goddess of Ephesus, but as many as 50 other gods are worshipped here.

Ephesus is:

- In the Meander Valley, which is a plain southeast of the Cayster River (Meander River) which connected the Aegean Sea (Mediterranean) to the harbor for the port of Ephesus.
- The ancient port of Ephesus is 4 miles inland from the coast of the Aegean Sea.
- By 350 AD the Cayster River was so silted up from 1,000's of years the channel was no longer useable. Today the area and the ancient port are marshy land
- Described in many ancient inscriptions as:  
“THE FIRST AND GREATEST METROPOLIS OF ASIA”
- Population is 250,000 which places Ephesus 4<sup>th</sup> behind Rome, Alexandria and Antioch
- For 150 years Ephesus was Rome's administrative center in Asia
- Roman mile markers in Asia were numbered from Ephesus
- Ephesus was very prosperous and controlled the economics of Asia
- Ephesus is mentioned 18 times in the NT
- Today ancient Ephesus is known as Efes and is 2 miles from the city of Selcuk (population 30,500)

Archaeology:

- Excavation began in 1863
- Since 1895 there have been annual excavations with published reports every year by the Austrian excavation team working the site.
- 3,500 inscriptions have been found
- Foundations and walls have been identified for temples, a library, two market places, fountains, gymnasiums, bath houses
- Houses with 3 floors surrounding the columned open center court have been excavated that belonged to the wealthy. These homes show remains of walls decorated with fresco and floors with scenes from Greek literature designed in mosaic.
- Paul worked in this city for 3 years and wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians from Ephesus.
- Timothy worked here and received 1 and 2 Timothy from Paul while living in Ephesus.
- John wrote his Gospel and 1, 2 and 3 John from Ephesus, and, also, addressed the Ephesian church from the Isle of Patmos in the book of Revelation.
- Much of the city, including the Jewish quarter from the first century, remains unexcavated.

**Acts 19:1** – Paul meets followers of Jesus who only know John the Baptist’s message and introductory statements concerning Jesus plus bits and pieces from Jesus’ teaching and ministry. This is 20 years after the resurrection. They did not know about Jesus’ death, resurrection and the out pouring of the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit had not yet come on these men. Romans 8:9 says that if you do not have the Spirit you do not belong to Christ.
- Paul teaches, the Ephesian disciples of John the Baptist believe, Paul baptizes and the Holy Spirit manifests
- This is very similar to Apollos’ situation in Acts 18:25

**19:8** – Paul spoke for 3 months in the Ephesian synagogue.

- Synagogue rulers were more tolerant in Ephesus than those in Thessalonica who only listened for 3 weeks and the Corinthians who soon became abusive and took Paul to court.
- The Jewish Quarter in Ephesus has not been excavated yet. So, the Ephesian synagogue(s) has not yet been found.
- Inscriptions found include:
  - Stone fragment inscribed with a menorah with inscription: “THE ALTAR”
  - An inscription that reads: “MAY THE YEARS OF THE RULERS OF THE SYNAOGUE AND OF THE ELDERS BE MANY”
    - “rulers” is “archisynagogo” and “elders” is “presbyteroi”
  - Josephus says the Jews in Ephesus were granted citizenship and were given exemptions for certain Sabbath activities
  - Three inscriptions from Jewish tombs have been found. One refers to the deceased Jew as “THE CHIEF DOCTOR OF THE CITY.”

**19:9** – Tyrannus Lecture Hall

- Wider variety of buildings, halls and schools have been excavated. One library is named “Library of Celsus” but none with Tyrannus’ name.. yet.
- Tyrannus either owned the building or used the building for his morning classes
- When Opposition in the synagogue was too intense and prevented Paul from executing his duties as an Apostle he began to teach intensely every day at noon in an available Lecture Hall of Tyrannus
- Many Jews followed Paul out of the synagogue to the lecture hall
- Notice that Paul did not set up a synagogue, a synagogue service or even a church, but simply began teaching.
- The Western Text has the information here at 19:9 that says that Paul taught from 11 AM until 4 PM daily.
- Paul’s day in Ephesus:
  - 7 AM (sunrise)-11 AM, working with his trade as a leather worker
  - 11 AM-4 PM – teaching during the lunch, rest and personal time (See Acts 20:34)
  - 4 PM – 8 PM (sunset) – return to work
- At 11 AM public activity came to a stop. Scholars say there were more people asleep in Ephesus at 1 in the afternoon (1 PM) than at 1 o’clock in the morning (1 AM.)
- People were forfeiting their daily naps/siesta for Bible teaching.

**19:10** – Paul did this in Tyrannus’ Lecture Hall for 2 years.

- During this time missionary activity spread into Asia
- It was at this time Epaphras enters the story (Unwritten in Acts) by evangelizing the Lycus Valley (Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis)
- John’s seven churches of Asia would have originated at this time.