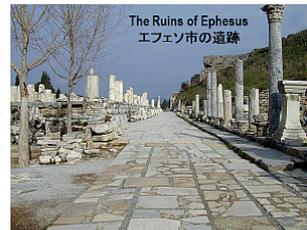


I. Introduction

Good morning! Today we will be starting Acts 20, but first let's take a moment to remember the end of Acts 19. Paul was in Ephesus, a large and important city with a population of about 250,000. So there was plenty of work for Paul to do, and he had been preaching every day for two years in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. The Lord was doing extraordinary miracles through him and many people in Ephesus and the whole region were coming to faith in Jesus.



But where there is much success, there is also often strong opposition. In Ephesus, this opposition came through a man who made his living manufacturing idols. **Acts 19:24**, introduces the man, saying, **“A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen.”** The success of Paul's preaching was hurting Demetrius' business, so he called the craftsmen together and gave an inflammatory speech that resulted in a riot.



People gathered in the theater at Ephesus and filled the place with shouting and confusion. The riot was large and dangerous and lasted for hours as the people of Ephesus shouted the name of their idol, Artemis. Eventually the city clerk got control and dismissed the crowd, but by that time the whole city was stirred up. Today we will see that after this Paul decided to leave Ephesus before more trouble came and endangered the disciples in the city. But first, what did we learn when we studied that passage?



First, we learned about the foolishness of idol worship. As **Isaiah 44:9** says, **“All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame.”** We can see that the people of Ephesus were foolish in their attachment to idols. But we also learned that we should be very careful how we criticize, because we ourselves are often guilty as well. As John Calvin said, *“Every one of us is, even from his mother's womb, a master craftsman of idols.”* We need to examine ourselves daily to find and eliminate the things which draw us away from God and that become idols to us. Not only obvious things like bowing to statues and praying to false gods, but also things like wealth, fame, sex, high education, and luxury products can become idols in our lives. We should guard our hearts and develop a good understanding of all things, remembering that our hearts belong to the Creator God who is Lord of all.



Let's go on to today's Scripture passage, Acts 20:1-16.

II. Scripture Reading (Acts 20:1-16, NIV, 1984)

1 When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-by and set out for Macedonia. 2 He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, 3 where he stayed three months. Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. 4 He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. 5 These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas.

6 But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. 9 Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. 10 Paul went down, threw

himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!"
 11 Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. 12 The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

13 We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot. 14 When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. 15 The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Kios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. 16 Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

III. Teaching

In this passage, Paul is continuing his third missionary journey, which lasted from about AD 53-58. At the beginning of the passage, he is in Ephesus, on the western coast of modern day Turkey. From there, Paul travelled throughout modern day Greece; he would have passed through Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and other cities. These are places that Paul had visited on his second missionary journey, so Paul is following up on the churches that were established then. Toward the end of today's passage, we see Paul returning to Turkey and travelling as far as Miletus.



This chart shows the seven major Old Testament Jewish feasts. These feasts were very important to all of the Jews in Paul's time, including the Jews like Paul who had believed in Jesus. So it is not surprising that the New Testament often mentions these feasts. Many Bible interpreters believe that each feast has a prophetic meaning for the Christian church as well. We won't discuss the feasts today, but it is a good study for another time.

Order	ユダヤ教の祭り Festival	月 Month	日間 Day(s)
1	Passover 過ぎ越し祭	1	14
2	Unleavened Bread 除酵祭	1	15-21
3	Firstfruits 刈り入れの祭り	1	16
4	Weeks, Pentecost 7週の祭り、 五旬祭	3	6
5	Trumpets, Rosh Hashanah ラッパを吹き鳴らす祭り	7	1
6	Day of Atonement, 贖罪日、 Yom Kippur ヨム・キプール	7	10
7	Tabernacles, 仮庵の祭り Booths	7	15-22

In today's passage, verse 6 mentioned that Paul and his company left Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread and then verse 16 mentions that Paul is trying to get to Jerusalem by Passover. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is the week after Passover, and Pentecost is fifty days after Passover. If we add up the days mentioned in the text and consider the time required for travelling by ship and walking, it is clear that Paul needed to hurry if he was going to make it to Jerusalem by Passover.

Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem, but he still took time to spend seven days at Troas. The last day of his week at Troas was a Sunday. **Acts 20:7, "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight."** Paul wanted to share as much as possible with the church at Troas before he left, so he gave a super-long message. But we should probably imagine a five or six-hour message, not a twelve-hour message, since Bible scholars agree that this was an evening worship service.



Since the Jews counted sunset as the start of the new day, a few scholars think that the meeting started around six pm on Saturday; and, at least one Bible, the Today's English Version (TEV), translates the verse that way. But the majority of scholars think the meeting started Sunday evening, following the Roman system, not the Jewish system. This seems more likely because Luke, the author of Acts, is a gentile, and in Acts 1:1 he addresses the book to a gentile man, Theophilus. A gentile author writing for a gentile reader would probably not use the Jewish system of days.

Acts 20:9, "Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead." Luke was a doctor, so I think we can believe him when he says Eutychus was dead. Paul had preached for hours, and now a tragedy has visited the church at Troas. The people must have been grief-stricken.



Acts 20:10, “Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. ‘Don't be alarmed,’ he said. ‘He's alive!’” This verse reminds us of how Elisha laid on top of another young boy and raised him from the dead (2 Kings 4:34). I think Paul must have cried out to the Lord in prayer even as he threw himself on the young man and the Lord promptly answered that prayer. No doubt, the whole congregation was praying for the boy from the moment they saw him fall out the window. The amazing miracle must have been a wonderful confirmation of God’s love for the church.



The fact that this grace was given to a young man who had fallen asleep shows us how God’s love is given to the weak. We might be annoyed with ourselves for falling asleep in church and we might be criticized if we were foolish enough to sit in a dangerous place like a window. But God shows His love by blessing the boy and the church with new life.

Let’s go back to **Acts 20:7**, for a minute, **“On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.”** This verse is one of the first and clearest references to Sunday worship in the early church. The believers in Troas came together to break bread, a celebration of communion, probably with a full meal at that time. As they remembered the cross of Christ in communion and celebrated His resurrection; they were renewed in their faith just as we are when we receive communion. And, on the occasion of coming together for worship, a teaching message was shared.

The basic pattern of Sunday worship services was established very early in church history; we can already see all of the elements of a modern worship service here in Acts. But some people may wonder why the day of worship was moved from Saturday to Sunday. Then and now, the Jews worship on Saturday. By the Jewish system of new days starting at sunset, a Saturday Sabbath service would not be held on Saturday evening, because that is already the beginning of Sunday. So even if the minority of Bible scholars who argue that Acts 20:7 refers to a Saturday evening gathering were right, this would still be a Sunday worship service.

But Jesus and the apostles were Jews; they worshipped on Saturday, in accord with the command of **Exodus 20:8-11, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”**

Some calendars show Monday as the first day of the week, but in the Middle East and in the west, Sunday is the first day of the week and the seventh day is Saturday. So the Jewish Sabbath worship was on Saturday, because the Scripture says that the Lord rested on the seventh day and blessed it. By the way, I should mention that this pattern remains the same even if the creation week is not interpreted as a literal week. Saturday worship was established among the Jews at least 1,500 years before Jesus’ time, and the first Christians were Jews, so why did the early church worship on Sunday?

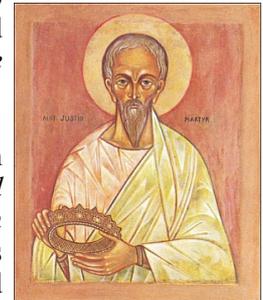
Well, let’s consider this question from a practical standpoint first. As we have seen in Acts, when he arrived in a new city, Paul usually went to the Sabbath worship at the synagogue and looked for opportunities to preach the gospel. In the same way, it was natural for Jews who had believed in Jesus to continue to worship at the synagogue on the Sabbath. But in many places there was a split in the synagogue between those who believed in Jesus and those who did not. So it is not surprising that the new Christians wanted to have their own meeting. By having it on Sunday, it was convenient for those who wanted to continue to attend the Jewish service on Saturday also to do so. So for a time, it was common for new Christians to attend the Jewish Sabbath services at the synagogue and then to have a second meeting of Christian believers on Sunday.

So there was a practical reason for the church to meet on Sunday. But, more importantly, there is also a theological reason. The proclamation of the resurrection is absolutely central to the preaching of the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus. And,



because Jesus rose from the grave on Sunday morning, there was a desire to worship on Sunday in commemoration of the resurrection. **Luke 24:1**, tells us, **“On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.”** It was Sunday morning, and the women wanted to place the spices with the body of Jesus. But angels appeared and told them, **Luke 24:6a**, **“He is not here; he has risen!”**

Jesus rose from the grave on Sunday, and the disciples knew that Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8) and that He is the eternal and true High Priest (Hebrews 4:14). So it was natural for them to decide to worship on Sunday, for, as **Hebrews 7:12**, declares, **“For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.”** In the New Testament, Sunday worship already appears here in Acts 20:7 and in 1 Corinthians 16:2. The practice of Sunday worship quickly became standard throughout the early church so that early in the second century, Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), was able to declare that, *“We all gather on the day of the sun’ (recalling both the creation of light and the resurrection).”*



The Epistle of Barnabas, a non-canonical, Christian work that was written sometime between AD 70 and AD 131 also speaks of Sunday worship, saying, *“And we too rejoice in celebrating the Eighth Day; because that was when Jesus rose from the dead, and showed Himself again, and ascended into heaven.”* This work mentions the idea that the Sunday of Jesus’ resurrection is the eighth day, the Sunday of a second week of God’s work, a new beginning marking the start of a new era, the church age.

So we know that the early church worshipped on Sunday, and the time came when the Roman persecutions of Christians ended and the Roman Empire began to look on the church with favor. On March 3rd of AD 321, the Emperor Constantine officially declared Sunday to be a day of rest, saying, *“On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.”* This edict does not mention the church, but it was clear that the intent was to make it easy for Christians to gather on Sundays for worship. Today, throughout most of the world, Sunday is recognized as a day of rest and most churches worship on Sunday.

Sunday worship is the traditional day of worship for Christians since the early days of the church. But it is tradition, not law, and examination of the Scriptures shows that churches are free to worship on any that they prefer. In fact, in **Romans 14:5-6**, Paul writes for us, **“One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.”**

IV. Conclusion

In Christ, we have freedom, for we are not under law; we are under grace (Romans 6:14). But we do need the fellowship and encouragement of coming together to worship for our spiritual growth. So, let’s close with the admonition of **Hebrews 10:25**, **“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

V. Prayer