

Paul Restores a Dead Man to Life (Acts 20:1-12)^a

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-45:59

Context

1. **Paul on his third missionary journey**
2. **Retracing much of his route on the second journey**
3. **Focus is not evangelization in new regions, but rather discipleship: building up the newly established churches**
4. **Found his way to Ephesus, where God opens a lengthy opportunity to teach—lasting over two years**
5. **Gospel impact upon Ephesus: magic books were burned, silversmith's losing income due to declining sales of silver shrines of Diana**
6. **Near riot in response to perceived threat upon the Temple of Diana — the “uproar” mentioned in the first verse of today's passage**

Passage (Acts 20:1-12)

[1] After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to [himself], embraced [them], and departed to go to Macedonia. [2] Now when he had gone over that region [3] and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. [4] And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. [5] These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. [6] But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days. [7] Now on the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. [8] There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. [9] And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. [10] But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing [him] said, “Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.” [11] Now when he had come up, had

broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. [12]
And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.¹

Travel (Acts 20:1-6)

1. **Paul purposed to travel to Macedonia (modern day Northern Greece). Achaia (modern day Southern Greece) and eventually Rome, sending Timothy and Erastus ahead into Macedonia (Acts 19:21-22).**
 2. **Now crosses to Macedonia (Philippi, Amphipolis, Thessalonica, Berea) and down south as far as Corinth (in Achaia).**
 3. **Stayed in Greece 3 months (Acts 20:3)**
 4. **Decided to retrace steps back north through Macedonia rather than sailing by ship across the Mediterranean to Syria (Antioch in Syria being his home, sending church).**
 5. **Various of his traveling companions, including Timothy, crossed back into Asia (modern day western Turkey), waiting in Troas for Paul and Luke (Acts 20:4-5)**
 - A. Companions were representatives of various churches in Macedonia and Asia Minor stewarding funds from the churches destined for the saints of Jerusalem
 - B. Luke was last heard of in Acts 17:1 and apparently remained in Philippi until Paul's return journey north
 6. **After the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover, cf. Ex. 12:15; 13:7), Paul and Luke sailed from (near) Philippi back to Troas**
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Teaching the Fledgling Church (Acts 10:7-12)

1. **First day of the week**
 - A. Breaking bread - probably the Lord's Supper and later, a fellowship meal
 - B. Some believe this is Saturday evening, following the end of the Sabbath at sundown
 - C. Another passage which mentions the Church meeting on Sunday is found in 1 Corinthians 16

“On the first [day] of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (1Cor. 16:2)

D. Sunday, not Saturday night

I. Luke appears to be using Roman, rather than Jewish, concepts of “day”

- a. Paul intended to depart the “next day” (v. 7) — which occurred at day-break (v. 11).
- b. If Paul began preaching on Saturday evening (the beginning of the first day of the week according to Jewish reckoning) the next morning would still have been the same day (Sunday stretches from Sundown on Saturday until sundown on Sunday)

II. Didache (circa A.D. 100) indicates otherwise³

“And on the Lord’s Day of the Lord come together, and break bread, and give thanks, having before confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.” — *The Didache, Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, 14.1.

2. **Long teaching session - at least approximately 12 hours (sundown Sunday to sun-up on Monday), possibly longer if it began Sunday morning or afternoon**

A. Lengthy communion mentioned in a letter to George Whitefield

. . . Ralph Erskine had reported in a letter to Whitefield: “Sabbath, June 10, 1737. I preached at half past seven in the morning. The tables began to be served at little before nine, and continued till about twelve at night, there being between four and five thousand communicants.”⁴

B. Here, the lengthy duration appears to have been taken up by Paul’s teaching

C. How “flabby” today’s Church is by comparison!

- I. OK - so it is somewhat of a special situation: the apostle Paul, when would they hear from him again?
- II. Maybe could get a church today to stay engaged with worship music that long
- III. Maybe even a prayer vigil

IV. Possibly community service

V. But for teaching? NOT! Today's reluctant tolerance of doctrine is completely out-of-step with the New Testament and it shows!

VI. The average church-going Christian doesn't consider Sunday to be "the Lord's day," — it's just another day off to do what "I want to do", although I'll give up an hour or a bit more of "my time" for church.

VII. J. Vernon McGee

I tell congregations very frankly that I'm a long-winded preacher. I'm known as that. I love to teach the Word of God. I have a system of homiletics that I never learned in the seminary. I picked it up myself—in fact, I got it from a cigarette commercial. This is it: It's not how long you make it but how you make it long. I believe in making it long; my scriptural authority for it is that Paul did it. He spoke until midnight. You can't help but smile at that.⁵

I confess that Paul's experience has always been a comfort to me. When I look out at the congregation and see some brother or sister out there sound asleep, I say to myself, "It's all right. Just let them sleep. Paul put them to sleep, too."⁶

3. Paul's miraculous work

A. Paul was evidently teaching in an upper room where there were many lamps (Acts 20:8)

B. The influence of the lamps

I. Oil lamps - similar to kerosene lamps still used on some traditional boats today

II. Warmth and fumes drift toward the windows

III. Eutychus possibly sitting on ledge of a window — where the fumes would have been concentrated as they exited the building

IV. Drifted off to sleep, fell from the third story

V. "Taken up dead" (according to Luke, a qualified physician)

C. Paul's response

- I. Paul does down to the ground floor from the upstairs room
- II. "Fell on him, and embraced him" (Acts 20:10)
 - a. Did Paul recollect the manner in which Elijah stretched himself out on the widow of Zarephath's son to restore him to life (1K. 17:21-22)?
 - b. Also somewhat similar to the way in which Elisha healed the son of a notable Shunammite woman
 - i. "And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm" (2K. 4:34)
 - c. Was Paul led of the Spirit to approach the situation this particular way?
 - d. F.F. Bruce suggests the healing may not have been miraculous

Paul's treatment, similar to that given in other circumstances by Elijah and Elisha . . . suggests artificial respiration.⁷

D. Peter vs. Paul - what Peter did by apostolic authority so did Paul — this authenticates his apostolic authority (2Cor. 11:5; 12:11-12)

- I. Both healed a man born lame, Peter (Acts 3:6-7), Paul (Acts 14:8-10).
- II. Both heal through indirect media, Peter via a shadow (Acts 5:15), Paul via handkerchiefs (Acts 19:11-12).
- III. Both impart the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, Peter (Acts 8:14-17), Paul (Acts 19:6).
- IV. Both oppose a sorcerer, Peter (Acts 8:20), Paul (Acts 13:6-12).
- V. Both were worshiped, Peter (Acts 10:25), Paul (Acts 14:11-13).
- VI. Both miraculously released from prison, Peter (Acts 12:7-11), Paul (Acts 16:26-29).
- VII. Both raised the dead, Peter (Acts 9:36-42), Paul (Acts 20:9-12).

- a. Peter raised Dorcas (Tabitha) in Lydda (Acts 9:40)
- VIII. Both rendered swift judgment, Peter (Acts 5:4-5,9-10), Paul (Acts 13:11).
- IX. Both have one complete sermon recorded by Luke, Peter (Acts 2:14-40), Paul (Acts 13:16-41)
- X. Both entrusted with gospel to people groups, Peter to Jews (Gal. 2:7-8), Paul to Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal. 2:7-8).
- E. Paul's confidence in the healing
- I. "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." (Acts 20:10)
 - II. Paul went right back upstairs, broke bread and ate, and continued teaching "a long while" (Acts 20:11)
- F. Evidence in the epistles that Paul's ability to miraculously heal appears to have declined with time
- I. This event in approximately A.D. 55
 - II. A.D. 60-62, Paul mentions that Epaphroditus was "sick almost unto death" — even though he was in Paul's presence ministering to him (Php. 2:17,25-30).
 - III. A.D. 62-64, Paul recommend's wine for Timothy's frequent infirmities (1Ti. 5:23)
 - IV. A.D. 66-67, Paul left Trophimus, his traveling companion mentioned in verse 4 of this passage, sick in Miletus (2Ti. 4:20)
- G. Acts documents the establishment of the early church and initial evangelistic outreach — but should not be taken as the norm for every aspect for the work of the church throughout history
- I. The coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost — historically unique
 - II. The initial giving of the Spirit to form the body of Christ among different people groups (Jews—Acts 2, Samaritans—Acts 8, Gentiles—Acts 10)
 - III. Ignoring evidence within other passages that miraculous works waned with time—and that revelatory-related gifts were destined to end (1 Corinthians

13)

- IV. “Acts 29” youth group - a recipe for dashed expectations and failure to endure in faith to the end
- V. Zeal, but lacking in knowledge has no staying power

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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV](#), Acts [20:1-12](#)
2. [Ref-0164](#), 14/1 (2003):130-133(133)
3. “It is helpful to know that around A.D. 100, the day on which believers were to gather for the breaking of bread was Sunday, not the Sabbath as some would have us believe. . . [William C. Varner, Book review of “The Didache”]”²
4. [Ref-1310](#), 85
5. [Ref-0465](#), 4.602
6. [Ref-0465](#), 602
7. [Ref-0653](#), 385.

Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0164** Richard L. Mayhue, ed., *The Master's Seminary Journal* (Sun Valley, CA: Master's Seminary). [www.mastersem.edu].
- Ref-0465** McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Ref-0653** F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).
- Ref-1310** Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield (Volume 2)* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980). ISBN:[978-0-85151-300-3](#)^d.

Links Mentioned Above

- a - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/70_Acts_20_1-12/index.htm.
- b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- d - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-85151-300-3>.