

## Hurrying Towards Jerusalem

Acts 20:13-16.

Sunday September 11, 2011

### I. A detailed chronology.

- A. From the time Paul leaves Corinth, retracing his steps through Macedonia because of the plotting of the Jews, Luke gives us a detailed itinerary and timeline as Paul travels towards Jerusalem.
- B. The route Paul takes from Corinth to Jerusalem via Macedonia is much longer than the direct route from Corinth to Jerusalem by sea. It would be much longer for several reasons:
  1. Geographically, the distance to be covered is much longer.
  2. Circumstantially, Paul would be visiting with the churches along the way, and, while enjoying their hospitality, he would have to spend some time with them, dealing with problems etc.
  3. Finally the mode of traveling on foot would be much more strenuous, requiring periods of rest.
- C. There is Paul's stated objective to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
- D. Paul had left Corinth in the spring and spent the feast of Passover, and the feast of Unleavened Bread which followed it, with the church of the Philippians.
- E. There are seven weeks between Passover and the day of Pentecost.
  1. The first week is the feast of Unleavened Bread which Paul spent in Philippi.
  2. The next five days were spent sailing to Troas, Acts 20:6. Adverse weather no doubt played a role here, for this was normally a two day journey. Paul arrives in Troas on a Monday, meaning that he missed the Lord's day with this congregation which he had intended to spend with them, for he spends a whole week in Troas, and he makes the observances of the following Lord's day an all night affair.
  3. The journey from Troas to Miletus took either four or five days as it is outlined in our text. With that the apostle had covered about one seventh of the distance to Jerusalem, and he had now used up half the time between Passover and Pentecost. The pressure is on!
- F. We see that pressure come to light in two ways:
  1. After teaching and preaching and talking with the folks in Troas all night, even until daybreak, Paul leaves Troas on foot that morning to go to Assos, where he would board a ship to Miletus, a seven hour walk.
    - Paul's travel companions make the same journey to Assos by boat, which was double the distance and took about the same amount of time.
    - Why would Paul want to walk, alone, having been up and about for a day and a night already? No doubt it was to be alone with the Lord in thought and in prayer. He had learned from His Master who spent many a night alone in the mountains and desolate places, with His Father, after spending a whole day in demanding ministry activities, and only to face a new demanding day.
  2. A second way of dealing with this pressure comes to light as Paul sails right past the city and seaport of Ephesus. Instead, he sails to the next port to the South of Ephesus, Miletus. From there he summons the elders of the church

in Ephesus for the purpose of meeting with them and exhorting them one last time. Paul clearly avoids meeting with this church as a whole, and all its people, fearing he might get bogged down for some time in Ephesus that way. The Ephesian elders would make the round trip to Miletus in a day, leaving them a few hours to meet with Paul.

## II. Why be in Jerusalem at Pentecost?

- A. Why did the Apostle Paul not take a little more time to get to Jerusalem rather than putting himself under all this pressure?
- B. It should be noted here that there was a tentativeness about this matter in the mind of the apostle, for Luke notes that Paul was hurrying towards Jerusalem, to be there “if possible” on the day of Pentecost. It is just as clear however from these circumstances that Paul was doing his utmost to be there by Pentecost, leaving us with the question, why?
- C. The answer has to do with the significance of Pentecost in the Jewish mind.
  1. Pentecost was a sort of thanksgiving feast for the wheat harvest which had just been completed, and which supplied Israel with bread for the next year.
    - This year however there was nothing to gather; the harvest had failed, and famine was the sure prospect for the coming year as the previous year’s wheat was running out.
    - Pentecost was the time the country switched over from eating bread made from the old wheat to that made from new wheat. The offerings from the Gentile churches allowed the churches in Judea to buy wheat abroad and so to avoid the ravages of famine for the coming year.
  2. Pentecost was also the anniversary of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. 45 days after Passover Israel arrives at Mt. Sinai. On day 46 Moses goes up the mountain to meet with God. On day 47 he comes back to instruct the people to prepare themselves for three days to meet with God for the giving of the law (the 10 commandments) on day 50. Exodus 19 and 20.
    - That first Pentecost was the giving of the ministration of the letter to Israel.
    - The new and true Pentecost however had taken place 50 days after the true and final Passover, and it constituted the ministration of the Holy Spirit given to Jew and Gentile alike. The offering was the proof; a fine harvest of Spirit worked fruit grown in the hearts of Gentile believers.

## III. A lesson to learn from Acts 20:1-16

Why does the Lord not streamline the providential circumstances surrounding the life and ministry of His servants? Why is Paul denied a smooth journey to Jerusalem from Corinth; why the plotting of the Jews; why the setback in reaching Troas and missing the Lord’s day by just a day; Why wasn’t enough time allowed for Paul to get some sleep before walking to Assos etc.?

It is because the Lord would not have you make idols out of ease, convenience and pleasure. How often do we center our decision making process around these concepts? Rather He would have our decision making process centered around Him and the wellbeing of His sheep, and have us be willing to embrace hardships in the process.