

Second Apostolic Journey Part 2

Acts 16:9–17:15

Paul and Silas began Paul's second journey by traveling to many of the churches formed previously in the area called southern Turkey. They recruit Timothy in Lystra to help them minister to the churches. They were directed by the Holy Spirit to travel from the region of Lycaonia (south central Turkey) to Troas without deviating to the north or to the south. While in Troas, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him for help. Macedonia was a region located in modern day northern Greece.

Macedonia (verses 16:9–21)

There are several well-known cities in the region of Macedonia. The most familiar of them are Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. One of Paul's first stops is in Philippi, a major city that was a Roman colony. Since Jews were recently exiled from Rome (Acts 18:2), Philippi followed suit and was not very welcoming of anyone who was Jewish. This would help explain why the Jews were meeting outside of the city at a river. Paul went to where they were meeting and had the opportunity to preach Jesus Christ to them. Lydia was among those who heard Paul and believed. She listened to Paul's words, and the Lord opened up her heart to understand what he was preaching. Some like to make this passage an example of how God calls a person who was previously chosen to be saved, but this passage only shows that she was saved because she heard the word and God opened her eyes of understanding. God works like this for all people who desire to be saved and has nothing to do with election. Election is about service, not salvation.

Lydia and her husband both believed what Paul was preaching, and they were both baptized. Paul will continue on to Corinth and baptize more believers there. Within the following two years, Paul came to understand that he did not come to baptize, unlike the 12 Disciples (1 Corinthians 1:17; Matthew 28:28). God had revealed to him that there was no need for water baptism in this Dispensation of Grace. There was now only one baptism, that of being baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The 12 Disciples were commanded to baptize by Jesus Christ, but Paul was not sent to carry out the so-called Great Commission. His commission was to preach the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–20). This is why any mention of Paul water baptizing ceases after Paul's visit to Corinth in Acts 18.

Philippi (verses 16:22–40)

Beaten and jailed

As Paul and his companions were traveling to the place of prayer by the river, a demon-possessed slave girl began to follow them and continually repeated, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." This continued for several days until Paul finally turned to her and cast out the demon. Although the demon was speaking the truth, the aim was to disrupt Paul's ministry. Paul finally had enough and turned to the slave girl and told the demon to come out of her.

Having lost their source of income from fortune telling, the owners of the slave girl dragged Paul and Silas into the marketplace before the rulers accusing them of disrupting the city and violating their customs. They were both beaten and thrown into prison without a proper trial.

Around midnight, Paul and Silas were singing praises to God so that the prisoners could hear them. An earthquake shook the foundations. All the doors flung open and the bands fell off all the prisoners. Thinking the prisoners had escaped, the jailer was going to kill himself, but Paul shouted for him to stop, everyone was still in their place. The jailer asked what he needed to do to be saved. Paul told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul and Silas were able to witness to everyone in the jail.

Believers baptized

Those who believed were baptized. Paul was still baptizing throughout his second journey. Then there was a change which led Paul to write to the Corinthians that he did not come to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17). He wrote this early into his third apostolic journey while in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8; Acts 19). Although many understand Acts 19:4–5 shows that they were re-baptized in water before being baptized by the Holy Spirit, verse 4 actually says that they were water baptized when they originally believed on Jesus Christ when they heard the Gospel of the Kingdom. Since they were already water baptized, Paul then gave them the Holy Spirit, most likely giving them an Act 2 experience.

Paul stopped baptizing sometime after his second apostolic journey. He was still getting additional information about the Mystery doctrine concerning the Body of Christ (Acts 26:16). It seems reasonable that the things revealed to him at that point were included in Paul's later books. Water baptism was part of the Gospel of the Kingdom and will be carried into the Tribulation (Matthew 28:28), but Paul is told by God that he was not sent to baptize. This shows that Paul was preaching a message that differed from Peter and the rest of the Disciples.

Paul and Silas released

The next day, the leaders of the city told the jailer to release Paul and Silas. However, being Roman citizens and jailed without a proper trial, the government officials would be in great trouble if this ever got back to Rome. They came personally to Paul and Silas and it seems that they apologetically asked them to leave the city.

Why didn't Paul and Silas claim their Roman citizenship before being beaten? First, they were beaten at the hands of the government officials who were fearful of the riotous mob. Giving the mob what they wanted was the best way to quiet them down. There was no time to think about proper legal procedures. Second, allowing themselves to be beaten would give some protection to non-Roman believers from retribution by city leaders. They may have worried that Paul and Silas would report them to Rome if they began to persecute believers who were living in the city.

It's also possible that not using his Romans citizenship against the government leaders would be a testimony to them, which could have caused them to be more open to listening to what they were preaching. Paul did use his Roman citizenship to avoid being whipped while in Jerusalem according to Acts 22:25–27. This is when Paul exercised his right to be tried before Caesar in Rome (Acts 25:10).

Thessalonica (verses 17:1–10)

They traveled though Amphipolis and Apollonia and stopped in Thessalonica, approximately 100 miles west southwest of Philippi. Thessalonica is large enough to have a synagogue, which is where Paul often goes to reach the largest number of people since it is a gathering place for both Jews and Gentiles. Although many believed, the unbelieving Jews, jealous of the attention Paul was receiving, set the city in such an uproar that the believers of the city sent Paul and Silas away in the night.

Berea (verses 17:10–15)

Traveling 45 miles west southwest, Paul and Silas come to the city of Berea. Berea is well known to Christians as the city where believers would readily hear the word and then search the Scriptures to see if it matched up with what they were being taught. As was their usual course of action, they stopped in the synagogue. Many came to believe. Once the unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul and Silas were in Berea, they traveled there to once again stir up the people against them. The Christian bothers sent Paul out of the city to the sea coast, leaving Silas and Timothy in Berea. Paul's escort brought him down to Athens. It was Paul's desire for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible.

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