

# TO JERUSALEM: ACTS 19.30-21.6



T. M. MOORE

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*To Jerusalem: Acts 19.30-21.6*

To Jerusalem: Acts 19.30.21.6  
Copyright 2016 T. M. Moore  
Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

*Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

## Introduction to Acts 19.30-21.6

Paul takes his journey toward Jerusalem. He wants to be there by Pentecost, probably for two reasons: To celebrate with the brethren and to reach many visitors for the Lord. He continues his ministry along the way, but a troubling tone begins to set in, as Paul senses something dire in the offing.

Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus give us a good glimpse into what must have been his practice in many of the places where he started churches or returned to train and appoint elders, and to strengthen the disciples.

Don't miss the fact, as we follow Paul's journey, that Christians seem to be just about everywhere. The ongoing work of Christ, launched and established, continues to be dispersed and replicated throughout the Roman world.

We're happy to offer a series of brief videos to introduce each portion of this study. You can view each one by [\*clicking here\*](#).

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

Please visit our website, [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org), to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and our worldview newsletter *The Week*.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

## 1 Disaster Averted

*Read and meditate on Acts 19.30-41.*

Irrational crowds can pose a danger to those whose way of life depends on reason and persuasion. For three years Paul had been ministering in Ephesus (Acts 20.31), proclaiming the Kingdom and teaching the Good News to all who came to him freely, of their own accord. His efforts met with great success, and, as we've seen, those whose living depended, in part, on a brisk business in idolatry were beginning to feel the pinch with so many in Ephesus coming to faith in Christ.

*For reflection*

1. What began as a loud vocal protest and demonstration was in danger of turning into a riot. Most people didn't know what all the hubbub was about, but they joined in the drama anyway. Once people identify a common foe – in this case, the Christians – it doesn't take much to ignite an uproar. Should we expect to be able to avoid this? Why or why not?
2. Paul thought he might go among this throng and explain himself, but neither those he was teaching in the faith nor those public officials he had befriended along the way were willing for this to happen. They kept Paul out of the fray and let the demonstration wind down at its own pace. Why was this a good idea?
3. As is clear from the reception given Alexander, Paul would not have had any success in trying to speak to this mob, and worse could have happened than merely being shouted down. The Romans believed in order. They had little patience with unruly mobs, and it only took a warning from the local magistrate to remind the irrational crowd that there were proper ways to deal with grievances, and this was not one of them. How can you see that God was at work here through the civil magistrate?
4. Demetrius and his colleagues were told, in effect, to shut up and put up – disperse and, if you're serious about your complaint, take it to the courts. End of discussion. Disaster averted. We know that the Apostle John ended up in Ephesus as shepherd there. Meditate on 3 John 12. Could this be the same man? If so, how should it encourage us as messengers of the Gospel?
5. It's easy to think that, at the slightest provocation or threat to our religious freedom, we need to rush into the fray and set everyone straight. Sometimes it's best just to let events run their course. The cool-headed magistrate in our story managed to defuse this dangerous situation by appealing to civic order and warning of consequences none of those present would have liked. It's good to remember that we do our work of proclaiming God's special grace within a larger framework superintended by His "common" grace. Government is a servant of God for good (Rom. 13.1-4). Are you prepared to help government do the job for which God established it?

*Summary*

The restraining power of the Holy Spirit sometimes works through civil magistrates, as in this situation in Ephesus. God is the King of all the earth. Our job is to pray for those He has allowed to come into public office. Looking at 1 Timothy 2.1-8, how should we pray for those in authority over us?

*Closing Prayer*

Give ear to my words, O LORD,  
Consider my meditation.  
Give heed to the voice of my cry,  
My King and my God,  
For to You I will pray.  
My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD;  
In the morning I will direct *it* to You,  
And I will look up.  
For You *are* not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness,  
Nor shall evil dwell with You.  
The boastful shall not stand in Your sight;  
You hate all workers of iniquity.  
You shall destroy those who speak falsehood;  
The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.  
But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy;  
In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.  
Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;  
Make Your way straight before my face.

Psalm 5.1-8

## 2 Journey Resumed

*Read and meditate on Acts 20.1-6.*

Paul read the events in Ephesus as signaling his need to resume his missionary journey. He had stopped in Ephesus for more than two years, but now it was time to move on, so that he might look into the state of the churches elsewhere and continue the work essential for building the churches.

*For reflection*

1. Paul perhaps rightly assumed that any continuing ministry on his part in Ephesus would have created more demonstrations and outcries – if not worse – and he appears to have been persuaded that the Ephesians, now properly ordered with elders in every church (cf. Acts 20, Titus 1.5), could manage things themselves. What roles or functions tell us that elders are doing the work God intends for them?
2. Paul headed off to Macedonia and Greece. His old enemies had not forgotten him, however, and seemed resolute in their determination to be done with him once and for all. This situation, on the heels of what happened in Ephesus, seems to have spoken volumes to Paul about his future. He escaped the Jews' plot. How should we relate to those in our Personal Mission Field who don't like us because of what we believe?
3. As Paul began his return to Antioch, we see joining him men whose names we will hear again in various of his epistles. In spite of danger and uncertainty, Paul worked to strengthen churches, recruiting and developing leaders to ensure the continuity of the ongoing work of Christ after he and his generation are gone. Why is it so important that churches have a plan for developing elders and other leaders? Looking at Paul's work, what might such a plan involve?
4. We're now beginning to get the names of more men who leave their homes and occupations to become part of Paul's ministry. Is Paul sensing that his days on earth may be drawing to an end? Or is he simply doing what he's supposed to do, what he knew Jesus had done, in making it a priority of his ministry to identify, recruit, train, equip, and enlist leaders for the days to come? Explain.
5. What does or should your church do to ensure there will always be fresh leaders for the generation to come?

*Summary*

Luke almost seems to be preparing us for the winding-down of Paul's ministry. Actually, he's showing us the ongoing work of Christ as the Spirit works to prepare new leaders for the succeeding generation. No amount of opposition can prevent the Kingdom from expanding. In the face of threats on every hand, Paul kept working to strengthen the churches and provide them with effective leaders. Can a church be said to be truly and firmly established if it fails to work toward the future in this way? Explain.

*Closing Prayer*

God *is* our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear,  
Even though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;  
*Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled,  
*Though* the mountains shake with its swelling. *Selah*

*To Jerusalem: Acts 19.30-21.6*

*There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,  
The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;  
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.*

Psalm 46.1-5

### 3 Words and Deeds

*Read and meditate on Acts 20.7-16.*

Here we get a glimpse into what Paul undoubtedly did at each stop on his journey. Worship, instruction, good works, encouragement: these were the elements of Paul's work of strengthening the churches.

*For reflection*

1. As the believers gathered for worship – here referred to as breaking bread – he met with them, reinforcing and expanding on his previous teaching. We notice that they assembled on the first day of the week. Why? Notice, also that all those gathered for worship are referred to as *disciples*. Is being a disciple different from just being a believer or a church member? Explain.
2. Paul had a lot to say and spoke a long time, but people understood his words were important, so we don't find any of them tapping their watches or looking around. Paul obviously believed in the strengthening power of sound teaching. How can we know when our churches are providing enough of this?
3. Eutychus made the mistake, in a room filling with warm and somewhat noxious air, of sitting on a window ledge. When he fell, Paul rushed to aid him, interrupting his teaching to care for this young man, and thus reminding the people of Troas that the Gospel is a ministry of words and deeds, and we must always be ready to care for those in our midst whose needs come to our attention. How is it apparent to the people in your community that your church's ministry consists of both words and deeds?
4. Paul departed Troas, heading for Jerusalem and ultimately, so he supposed, Antioch. He stayed away from Ephesus because returning there might delay him – and perhaps rekindle old hostilities? – but he will minister to the elders of the churches, having been away from them now for more than three months (v. 3). Why do you suppose it was so important to Paul to be in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost? Should we have a higher regard for Pentecost than we do? Explain.
5. Why did Paul walk the brief distance from Troas to Assos, there to board the ship the others had taken? Was this an attempt to deceive any enemies that might have been lying in wait for him? Or did he simply need a little time to himself? We don't know, really, But what do you think? Explain.

*Summary*

Paul was intent on getting to Jerusalem, but not so much so that he would fail to capitalize on opportunities to teach and equip. Paul seems like a very forward-thinking minister. Would you agree? Should ministers today be more forward-thinking in their lives and work? What about other disciples? Explain.

*Closing Prayer*

God has gone up with a shout,  
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.  
Sing praises to God, sing praises!

Sing praises to our King, sing praises!  
For God *is* the King of all the earth;  
Sing praises with understanding.  
God reigns over the nations;  
God sits on His holy throne.  
The princes of the people have gathered together,  
The people of the God of Abraham.  
For the shields of the earth *belong* to God;  
He is greatly exalted.

Psalm 47.5-9

## 4 Remember

*Read and meditate on Acts 20.17-24.*

Here is another glimpse into what Paul did throughout his second and third missionary journeys. We're going to linger here for a few days, because I think this section of Acts 20 gives us enormous insight into Paul, his ministry, and his vision for the church. In addition to evangelizing and starting new congregations, Paul met with existing churches in worship, and he set aside time to be with the shepherds of God's flocks, in order to remind them of the things most important to the ongoing work of Christ.

*For reflection*

1. Paul set forth his own example as a reminder and template for the elders from Ephesus – humility, diligence, faithfulness in work, both in public and in private, striving to build up the church and each member in the faith of Christ. Shepherds have three tools for making disciples and strengthening churches: prayer, the Word of God, and their personal example. How would you explain the relationship between these?
2. From his experience in Ephesus and Greece, Paul was becoming convinced that persecutions against him would increase in the days to come, yet his only concern was to remain faithful and finish his course. Is Paul being fatalistic in outlook, or merely planning to make the most of the time yet available to him? Explain.
3. Paul insisted his life as such didn't matter. What matters is the work of ministry, that those who are called to it persist faithfully in it, following the example and instruction of the Apostles, and working at all times to make disciples, build the Church, and further the ongoing Kingdom work of Christ.
4. Paul emphasized that both his teaching and his personal example were critical to the work of ministry. Pastors and elders do well to follow him in their own ministries, with humility, tears, diligence, boldness, and commitment to Christ and His Kingdom above all. How did Paul summarize his teaching ministry in verses 18-21? Should local churches feature these elements as well? Explain.
5. Paul insists that the Gospel is Good News about the grace of God. In what ways?

*Summary*

These inside looks at Paul's ministry are important. We should regard them as *typical* of what he did in every place. He reminded people of his work as an example, reviewed his teaching, talked about the days ahead, and urged them to remain faithful in their work. Does your pastor have anyone in his life to encourage him in these matters?

*Closing Prayer*

As for me, I will call upon God,  
And the LORD shall save me.  
Evening and morning and at noon

*To Jerusalem: Acts 19.30-21.6*

I will pray, and cry aloud,  
And He shall hear my voice.  
He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me,  
For there were many against me.

Psalm 55.16-18

## 5 Keep Watch

*Read and meditate on Acts 20.25-31.*

Elders are at all times to remember that this is not their church, but Christ's. He bought it with His blood, and He appointed them to shepherd and care for His sheep. They must be vigilant, thorough, personal, and courageous in defending the Lord's sheep and building them up in His Kingdom.

*For reflection*

1. Paul told these shepherds bluntly that they would not see him again, so they'd better be ready to do the hard work of shepherding God's flock, which they saw in and learned from him. As you understand it, what does the work of shepherding entail?

2. Paul insisted that he had taught *the whole counsel of God* to the elders and people in Ephesus. How should Paul's example of *teaching* the Word encourage and guide us as *students* of the Word?

2. The churches of the Lord will always be under attack, from without and within, as spiritual warfare rages at all times. Pastors and elders must guard the flocks of the Lord from false teaching, self-interested leaders, and spiritual assault. What kinds of attacks threaten the wellbeing of churches in our day? How should shepherds protect their flocks against such attacks?

4. Paul exhorts the shepherds to watch carefully over themselves, their teaching, and their flocks (cf. 1 Tim. 4.16; Heb. 13.17). Why? How should shepherds and other disciples exercise this kind of watch over themselves and one another?

5. The work of shepherding cannot be fulfilled in committees, on boards, or through programs. It takes shepherds being with and among the sheep entrusted to their care, getting to know them, building loving and trusting relationships, and watching over the progress of their souls with vigilance and prayer (Heb. 13.17). But it also requires people who are willing to be shepherded, and to accept the faithful instruction they receive and live by it (cf. 1 Thess. 5.12, 13). Absent such diligent shepherding, the Lord's flocks cannot flourish as He intends. Does this kind of shepherding exist in your church? Explain.

*Summary*

The strength and stability of a local church is not in its programs, budgets, or facilities. It's in its shepherds. Paul understood this. Do we?

*Closing Prayer*

The LORD *is* my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;  
For You *are* with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
Forever.

Psalm 23

## 6 A Final Word

*Read and meditate on Acts 20.32-38.*

Paul made it a policy never to be a financial burden to those among whom he ministered. He was willing to do whatever was needed to launch the ongoing work of Christ in some area, and to work at it until it became established.

*For reflection*

1. Apparently in Ephesus, as in Corinth and elsewhere, Paul kept a day job to meet his financial needs and to provide for those he enlisted to work with him (v. 34). What might we learn from Paul's example here about ways to *launch* new congregations in the ongoing work of the Lord?
2. What is the "inheritance among all those who are sanctified" which the Word of grace is able to provide for those who believe (v. 32)? How should knowing we have such an inheritance affect our daily walk with and work for the Lord?
3. The Ephesians doubtless shared of their resources with him – we don't see him chastising them as he did the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9) – but money was never an issue with Paul. Ministry was everything, and he worked hard at it; and he expected these elders to take up the baton and continue the race without missing a step. What did Paul want these shepherds to learn from his example (v. 35)? How does your church do this?
4. Only the Word of God can sustain the ongoing work of Christ (v. 32), but He is pleased to prosecute that work through faithful men and women who devote themselves selflessly to guarding, nurturing, and building-up the Body of Christ. Meditate on 1 Timothy 3. What kind of shepherds should congregations be seeking to develop?
5. Sure this would be difficult for those elders. But what about Paul? Christ had used him to bring these churches into being. He had trained these men, devoting many long hours to their preparation. He knew what lay ahead for them, both in the normal work of shepherding God's flock and the dangers of spiritual warfare. How hard must this have been for him, to entrust his life's work into the hands of men whose faces he would never see again? What might you do to help your pastor and elders (church leaders) identify, enlist, and train leaders for all aspects of your church's life and ministry?

*Summary*

Shepherding is difficult and important work. You need the right people in place, and they need to follow the example and instruction of Paul and Jesus (1 Cor. 11.1; Jn. 10) concerning how to do this work. What Paul told the shepherds at Ephesus he doubtless told elders, pastors, and church leaders everywhere he went. How can you know when your church is being shepherded according to the teaching of Paul and Jesus?

*Closing Prayer*

Blessed *be* the LORD,  
Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!

The LORD *is* my strength and my shield;  
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;  
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,  
And with my song I will praise Him.  
The LORD *is* their strength,  
And He *is* the saving refuge of His anointed.  
Save Your people,  
And bless Your inheritance;  
Shepherd them also,  
And bear them up forever.

Psalm 28.6-9

## 7 Warnings and Farewells

*Read and meditate on Acts 21.1-6.*

Luke slows down the story now in order to let the drama build. He remarks each stop along the way, mentions the seven-day stay in Tyre, and hints (the mention of Syria) that home in Antioch was close, but not to be gained at this time. He wants us to enter into the uncertainty, sadness, and yet, the courage and conviction of the Apostle Paul as he heads for what he is now certain will be a bad situation in Jerusalem.

*For reflection*

1. Meditate on the detail of Luke's travel log in verses 1-3. How does this lend historical credibility to the story?
2. The believers in Tyre urged Paul not to go there, undoubtedly because, as with the elders in Ephesus, he had shared his heart concerning what he was expecting. We notice that their words were informed (Greek: "kept saying to") by the Spirit of God. How should we interpret this? Luke flatly admits that the Spirit was speaking through these people. Yet Paul did not do what they asked. What was the Spirit's intention in moving them to speak these words?
3. Paul would not be deterred, however, and they knew it. What could they do but pray and bid one another Godspeed? The word *home*, coming as it does at the end of this periscope, implies safety and security such as Paul had long ago forsaken and was continuing to leave behind, just as Jesus did before him. So we're left with mixed feelings at the end of this. Why? Look at Revelation 1.9. In Jesus we have both tribulation, Kingdom (peace and joy), and patience. Can you see how Luke, not just here but in other places as well, is trying to encourage readers to live patiently within the tension of trial and peace? Explain.
4. Jesus had said that, as the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for His sheep. He expects the same of every shepherd appointed to the task of watching over the flocks of the Lord. Sometimes this requires sacrifices – time, convenience, family, work, friendships. But in order for God's flocks to *rest secure* in Him, His shepherds need to follow Paul as he followed Jesus (1 Cor. 11.1). Given the challenges shepherds may have to face in defending the Lord's flocks, how should you pray for the shepherds of your church?
5. How might you encourage your church's pastors and elders by acknowledging the sacrifices they make in order to care for the Lord's flock? What sacrifices is the Lord calling you to make in order to encourage others in their walk with and work for Him?

*Summary*

The Kingdom of God expands on earth as it is in heaven, bringing righteousness, peace, and joy – *home* – to all who enter and abide in it. However, it also provokes trials and tribulations because it can be an irritant to those who prefer to be their own gods rather than worship the one true God. How should you prepare each day for both the *Kingdom* of God and the *trials and tribulations* of living in this age in flight from God?

*Closing Prayer*

Vindicate me, O LORD,  
For I have walked in my integrity.  
I have also trusted in the LORD;  
I shall not slip.  
Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;  
Try my mind and my heart.  
For Your lovingkindness *is* before my eyes,  
And I have walked in Your truth.  
I have not sat with idolatrous mortals,  
Nor will I go in with hypocrites.  
I have hated the assembly of evildoers,  
And will not sit with the wicked.  
I will wash my hands in innocence;  
So I will go about Your altar, O LORD,  
That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,  
And tell of all Your wondrous works.  
LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house,  
And the place where Your glory dwells.  
Do not gather my soul with sinners,  
Nor my life with bloodthirsty men,  
In whose hands *is* a sinister scheme,  
And whose right hand is full of bribes.  
But as for me, I will walk in my integrity;  
Redeem me and be merciful to me.  
My foot stands in an even place;  
In the congregations I will bless the LORD.

Psalm 26

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What can we learn from Paul's example and teaching about the role of the Word of God in a believer's life, and in the life and work of a church?
2. What is the work of shepherds in a local church? How can we know when a local church is being shepherded as the Lord intends?
3. We've been thinking about the *launch* of the ongoing work of Christ and how it becomes *established* in a local church, so that this church can begin to *disperse* the Gospel and *replicate* the ongoing work of the Lord. Where does your church fit in that template?
4. What does it mean to live in the tension between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 19.30-21.6?

*Glory to Glory*

We are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ *from* the glory we encounter in God's Word to the way we *live for His glory* in the world (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31).

What have you encountered *of* God's glory in our reading and meditations in this week's studies? How has He shown Himself to you more clearly? How can this help you live more consistently *for* His glory in the daily details of your life?

What have you learned about yourself from Acts 19.30-21.6 to help you in knowing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom?

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.