



Study Guide: Acts – Chapter 20

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Acts Chapter 20 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Acts Chapter 20 serves as a pivotal narrative in the Apostle Paul's third missionary journey, highlighting his pastoral heart and unwavering commitment to the early Christian communities. This chapter offers a detailed account of Paul's travels, his farewell to the Ephesian elders, and a profound example of leadership and sacrifice. Readers should watch for the themes of perseverance, spiritual oversight, and the cost of faithful ministry as Paul prepares to face imminent trials.

Context

The immediate context of Acts 20 follows Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus, where he spent significant time teaching and strengthening the church. This chapter captures the transition from his work in Asia Minor toward his journey to Jerusalem, where he anticipates suffering. Historically, this period reflects the early church's expansion amid growing opposition. Key figures include Paul himself and the Ephesian elders, who represent the leadership of the local church. The setting moves from various cities in Macedonia and Greece to Miletus, where Paul delivers a heartfelt farewell address.

Outline

The chapter opens with Paul's travels through Macedonia and Greece, encouraging believers and collecting support for the Jerusalem church. Following this, Paul sails to Troas, where he raises Eutychus from the dead after a dramatic incident during a late-night gathering. The narrative then shifts to Miletus, where Paul summons the Ephesian elders for a poignant farewell speech. The chapter concludes with Paul's emotional departure, underscoring his dedication despite knowing the hardships ahead.

Verse-by-Verse Study



Verses 1-3: Paul travels through Macedonia, encouraging believers and preparing to sail to Syria. This shows his ongoing commitment to strengthening the churches and his strategic planning for the journey ahead.

Verses 4-6: The collection for the Jerusalem church is mentioned, emphasizing unity and mutual support among early Christians. Paul's extended stay in Greece reflects his pastoral care and teaching ministry.

Verses 7-12: In Troas, Paul preaches late into the night. The story of Eutychus, who falls asleep and falls from a window, highlights the power of God through Paul as he brings the young man back to life, reinforcing the authority of the gospel message.

Verses 13-16: Paul departs Troas and travels toward Miletus, deliberately avoiding Ephesus to save time, as he is eager to reach Jerusalem. This indicates his sense of urgency and awareness of impending challenges.

Verses 17-21: Paul meets with the Ephesian elders at Miletus, recounting his ministry among them, characterized by humility, service, and bold proclamation of repentance and faith.

Verses 22-27: Paul shares his awareness of the hardships awaiting him in Jerusalem, yet he remains obedient to the Spirit's call, underscoring his resolute faith and commitment to God's mission.

Verses 28-31: Paul charges the elders to shepherd the church vigilantly, warning them of future challenges and false teachers who will seek to lead believers astray.

Verses 32-35: Paul commends the elders to God's grace and reminds them of his example of hard work and generosity, encouraging them to serve others selflessly.

Verses 36-38: The chapter closes with an emotional farewell, marked by prayer and tears, illustrating the deep bonds between Paul and the Ephesian leaders and the cost of faithful ministry.

Key Themes

One key theme is the shepherding role of church leaders, emphasizing vigilance, care, and sacrifice for the spiritual well-being of the community. Another theme is perseverance in ministry despite impending suffering, as Paul models obedience to God's call over personal safety. The chapter also highlights the importance of unity and mutual support



within the early church, as seen in the collection for Jerusalem. Lastly, the power of the gospel is demonstrated through miraculous acts and bold proclamation, reinforcing the divine authority behind Paul's mission.

Cross-References

Paul's farewell speech in Acts 20:17–38 echoes Jesus' teachings on servant leadership found in Mark 10:42–45, where leaders are called to serve rather than be served. The warning about false teachers parallels Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Timothy, such as 2 Timothy 3:13, highlighting ongoing threats to church purity. The raising of Eutychus recalls Jesus' miracles of raising the dead (Luke 7:11–17), underscoring continuity in God's power working through His servants. Finally, Paul's commitment to the Spirit's guidance aligns with Acts 16:6–10, showing God's sovereign direction in missionary work.

Application

Modern disciples can learn from Paul's example of steadfastness in the face of adversity, encouraging believers to remain faithful even when ministry is challenging or costly. Church leaders are reminded of their responsibility to care diligently for their congregations, guarding against false teachings and nurturing spiritual growth. The call to generosity and hard work in service challenges contemporary Christians to support one another sacrificially. Additionally, the story of Eutychus invites believers to value the life-giving power of the gospel and the importance of attentive worship and teaching.

Summary

Acts 20 presents a rich narrative of Paul's ministry journey marked by encouragement, miraculous affirmation, and heartfelt leadership. Through his travels, teaching, and farewell to the Ephesian elders, the chapter reveals the demands and rewards of faithful service. It underscores the necessity of vigilant shepherding, the power of the gospel, and unwavering obedience to God's call, setting a profound example for all who follow Christ in ministry and daily life.