



Question: "What happened on Paul's second missionary journey?"

Answer: After Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas returned to Syrian Antioch and reported the great number of Gentiles in modern-day Turkey who had believed. They stayed "no little time" there (Acts 14:28).

While in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were met by a group who came down from Judea ("down" refers to elevation; Jerusalem sits at 2,582 feet above sea level, and Syrian Antioch about 220 feet) who taught that the Gentile converts must conform to Jewish standards, such as dietary laws and circumcision. Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the church elders to go to Jerusalem and hear what the apostles had to say. At the Jerusalem Council, after much deliberation, Peter stood and proclaimed that salvation was by faith, not works, and it was inappropriate to place such a "yoke" on the Gentiles' neck (Acts 15:10–11). James, the leader of the Jerusalem church and a half-brother of Christ, concurred, adding that, for the sake of peace within the church, the Gentiles should abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, and from eating blood or the meat of strangled animals (Acts 15:29). Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with representatives from the church in Jerusalem with these statements, and the Gentiles rejoiced that they didn't have to be circumcised in order to be truly Christian.

After some time, Paul proposed to Barnabas a second missionary journey together. Paul's plan was to return to the cities and churches they'd visited in Asia Minor on their first missionary journey (Acts 15:36). Barnabas agreed, but he wanted to take his cousin, John Mark, who had abandoned them shortly into that first trip (verses 37–38). Paul refused to take Mark with them, so Barnabas took Mark and set sail for Cyprus (verse 39). Paul took Silas, one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church who had accompanied Paul to Antioch (verse 40).

Instead of sailing, Paul started the second missionary journey overland, crossing one mountain range to Tarsus, then another to Derbe and Lystra as he and Silas moved west. In the area of Derbe and Lystra, Paul met up with Timothy again, whom Paul had mentored on his first trip. Timothy joined Paul and Silas as a ministry partner. Then Paul did something curious. Despite the fact that Timothy's father was Greek and the church in Jerusalem had just decreed that Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised, Paul circumcised Timothy. Orthodox Judaism still holds that Jewishness comes from the mother's line, and Timothy's mother was Jewish. As far as the Jews in Asia Minor were concerned, Timothy was a Jew who did not respect his Jewish heritage. "Because of the Jews," Paul made sure Timothy was in a position to receive respect as a Jewish believer (Acts 16:9). This is a classic example of deference—the yielding of one's rights in order not to offend those to whom one ministers.

Although Paul had planned on spending some time in the cities where he had earlier planted churches, the Holy Spirit guided him through Asia Minor quickly. On this second missionary journey, the Spirit forbade Paul to speak in the province of Asia, kept them out of Bithynia near the Black Sea, and led them directly to Troas, on the coast of the Aegean Sea. While in Troas, Paul received a vision of a man in Macedonia (in northern Greece) asking Paul to come and help them. Apparently, Luke joined the team at this point because he reports that "immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10). The use of first-person pronouns indicates that Luke was at that point a fellow traveler.

Paul's second missionary journey continued as the group sailed from Troas to the small island of Samothrace, then to the city of Neapolis on the Greek coast. They quickly made their way to the Roman colony of Philippi and stayed for a while (Acts 16:11–12). On the Sabbath, they went to the

riverside where they supposed the Jews would gather and found a group of women who had come to pray. One of the women there was a merchant named Lydia. She and her household were converted and baptized, and she compelled the missionaries to stay in her home (Acts 16:13–15). Lydia thus became the first convert to Christianity on European soil.

Sometime later, while going to a place of prayer, the missionaries were accosted by a slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination. The girl followed them, saying, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation” (Acts 16:16–17), and after several days Paul commanded the demon to leave her (verse 18). When the slave girl’s owners found that their source of income was destroyed, they brought Paul and Silas to the magistrate and incited the crowd against them. The missionaries were stripped, beaten, flogged, and thrown into prison, and their feet were placed in stocks (verses 19–24). All of this was highly illegal, since Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and had the right to a trial.

Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns when an earthquake shook the prison, opening the prison doors and loosening the chains of all the prisoners (Acts 16:26). When the jailor found the doors open, he drew his sword to kill himself, thinking the prisoners had fled and he would be held responsible (verse 27). But then he heard the voice of Paul telling him all the prisoners were still there. The jailor immediately asked how to be saved (verse 30), and Paul and Silas answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (verse 31). The jailor took Paul and Silas to his home, where he fed them and bandaged their wounds. He and his household believed and were baptized that same night (verses 32–34).

The next morning, when the jailor received word from the magistrate that Paul and Silas were to be released, he told them they were free to leave Philippi (Acts 16:35–36). They refused. As Roman citizens, Paul and Silas had been treated in violation of Roman law, and they demanded a public apology. The authorities were alarmed and came to the prison to personally escort Paul and Silas out (verses 37–39). The missionaries left Philippi after visiting Lydia and the Christians there (verse 40).

From Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia before reaching Thessalonica. (It seems that Luke remained in Philippi.) Paul spent three Sabbaths in the synagogue, reasoning with the Jewish men (Acts 17:1–2). Some were persuaded, but some were not. When Paul found a following of Gentiles and leading women, the Jewish men who had rejected Christ incited a mob and accused Paul and Silas of promoting another king besides Caesar and of turning “the world upside down” (verse 6, KJV). Unable to locate Paul and Silas, the mob dragged the missionaries’ host, Jason, to the city authorities. That night, Paul and Silas slipped away to Berea (verse 10).

The [Jews in Berea](#) were much more accepting of Paul’s message; Luke says they had “more noble character” and searched the Scriptures daily to ascertain the truth of Paul’s preaching (Acts 17:11). Many respected Greeks, men and women, were converted. Unfortunately, the unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica soon tracked Paul to Berea and once again stirred up the crowds (verse 13). The Christians quickly sent Paul to Athens by sea while Silas and Timothy remained behind, with instructions to join Paul as soon as they could (verses 14–15).

Paul found an attentive audience in Athens, and he was invited to speak at the Areopagus to the philosophers gathered there. Paul explained that the true God is not made of gold, silver, or stone and did not originate from the imagination of man (Acts 17:29). The philosophers listened until Paul spoke of the resurrection of Christ, and then some began to scoff (verse 32). A few men and women believed, but there is no record of Paul being able to establish a church there. Athenians were known for their endless debates, and many just wanted to hear Paul’s new “philosophy” and pick it apart (verse 21).

From Athens, Paul went to Corinth where he met fellow tentmakers [Priscilla and Aquila](#). They were Jews who’d been exiled when Emperor Claudius commanded that all Jews leave Rome (Acts 18:1–3).

Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth, and the group stayed in that city for a year and a half, preaching, gaining converts, and reasoning with those who rejected the gospel (verse 11). “Many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized,” including Crispus, the leader of the synagogue (verse 8). Eventually, the Jews brought Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, for trial. Gallio determined that, since it was an internal matter of a religious nature, it was not his concern, and he dismissed the case (verses 14–16).

Paul's second missionary journey continued as the missionary team left Corinth and sailed to Ephesus in Asia Minor, taking Priscilla and Aquila with them. Paul stayed in Ephesus for a little while, reasoning in the synagogue, but when the Ephesians begged him to stay, he declined (verse 20). Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus (where they later converted and taught [Apollos](#)), but Paul sailed from Ephesus to Caesarea in Israel, traveled to Jerusalem, greeted the church there, and then returned to Antioch (verse 22). The second missionary journey had come to an end.

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