

# Mnason

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, some of you will remember the last time we met to look at the subjects on the Wednesday evening. Of course, last Wednesday we didn't meet because of the Thanksgiving and National Day of Prayer the next day.

But a fortnight ago, we began a short series of what I described as key links. That is, people who were not themselves apostles, who may not have been in the first or even second rank of disciples, but who were key links in joining together the apostolic ministry in its first, as it were, way, and those who would come after that and perform a vital service for the Lord in the interim.

And we looked last time at Lydia, whose home was used as the church, the first church in Philippi, and to that extent, as far as we know, the first official church in Europe.

That we know of. And so, however, the Lord used that, our household, as a base for the apostles, for which to spread out the gospel throughout that part of Macedonia, and so into Europe.

And we said that we would look at various other individuals over the course of these key links, both of whom, all of whom, rather, are comparatively minor characters in the New Testament, but all performing, as I would suggest, the orbital function.

[ 1 : 2 3 ] However humble it might be. And tonight, we look at the subject of this disciple who was mentioned only once in this single verse 16, Manasseh of Cyprus, an old disciple with whom we should lodge.

With whom we should lodge where? Well, some have speculated that in the journey from Caesarea, which is, of course, on the coast, it was the port for Jerusalem, and it functioned as the capital for the province of Judea.

The procurator, whether Pontius Pilate or those who followed after him, Festus or Felix or whatever, would be based in Caesarea as the capital. It would have ready access to the sea, and then if you journeyed up to Jerusalem at all, you'd go up into the mountainous country and quite a journey, quite a lot of miles, but Caesarea was the capital.

And so here at Caesarea, there are certain disciples who, when Paul arrives there, they go to travel with him up to Jerusalem. Now, the reason they're going up to Jerusalem is the same reason Paul is going up.

If we turn back to chapter 20, you would see at verse 16, Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia, which is now western Turkey, for he hastened it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

[ 2 : 4 7 ] So it is Pentecost, one of the main Jewish festivals in the year, the 50th day, which of course comes from the Feast of Weeks, the seven weeks, and then the four weeks, which is 49 days, and then the day after, the seventh Sabbath, the first day of the week, which for us would be the Lord's Day, was the day of Pentecost, made most famous, of course, by chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, with the pouring out of the Spirit that day.

But it is for this festival that Paul seeks to be at Jerusalem as a devout Jew, and of course, Jews would be coming from all over the Roman Empire to gather at Jerusalem for this festival.

So these disciples are going up from Caesarea. Now, when it says they brought with them one Manassan of Cyprus, this is how the English has translated it. It's also possible that it might be they brought Paul to Manassan, Manassan, or they brought Manassan to Paul.

There's a number of possible combinations. Some have suggested that as they were journeying up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, quite a journey, they had to stop along the way at one of the villages, on the way up towards Jerusalem to lodge there, and that Manassan was one with whom they lodged.

And the area in which he would be living directly on the route, if that were the case, from Caesarea to Jerusalem, would be that area which, like Joppa, well, not Joppa, but Lydda, that sort of area that Peter visited in Acts chapter 9, where there were various disciples there.

[ 4 : 21 ] In Acts 9, verse 32, for example, he came down also to the saints, which dwelt at Lydda, or was lodged in the Old Testament times, sometimes described there.

It's the area which now is roughly where the Ben-Gurion International Airport is for Tel Aviv, which, of course, is based where Joppa was in the New Testament.

So it's near the coast, but it's somewhat along on the way up to Jerusalem. He might have been there. Now, it's perhaps most likely that being originally from Cyprus, and perhaps having come from Cyprus for the feast, he has entered the country through Caesarea, a major port is heading to Jerusalem, where almost certainly he has a house.

Now, some have suggested, oh, it doesn't mean he has to have a house. He could just have been meaning that they were going to share lodgings with him. But, you know, when Jerusalem is going to be packed out with pilgrims, and it's going to be full, swollen with extra people, it's a bit dodgy to sort of suddenly increase the number of your company.

Instead of just Paul and his immediate companions, now you've got all these extra disciples coming too, and it's far harder to lodge a crowd of people than it is to lodge just two or three.

[ 5 : 40 ] So the likelihood is that Manasseh has a house in Jerusalem. So this again in turn means that he is almost certainly a comparatively well-to-do person.

He's got money, he's got property in that sense. He's obviously not one who had sold that house yet. You know, we see we get the end of Acts chapter 4, that various people who had lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted as son of consolation, a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, another separate Jew, just like Manasseh here.

Having land, sold it, brought the money, they did it, the apostles' feet. Manasseh hadn't done that. He was perfectly free to do it or not to do it, and in a sense it's a good job he didn't, because now there is this house, we trust that it's his house, for Paul and his company to lodge, with whom we should lodge.

Now, is Manasseh Jewish? Is he Gentile? Well, I think we can say, without fear of contradiction, he is Jewish, despite the not particularly Jewish name that he's got.

[ 6 : 55 ] Lots of people have Greek names in that particular day and age. He's Jewish. One reason we see that is, first of all, not only is he going to Jerusalem, where presumably he has a house, but also he describes him as an old disciple.

We might read that and think, oh yes, it just means he was a very old man. Or it could mean that he had been discipled for a long time. It could be both, actually. But the word that is used here is a Greek term, *archaion*, from which we get the term *archaic*, which now we tend to think of as meaning old-fashioned.

But it's actually a term that is used when it's used in the New Testament, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles. It means that which was from the beginning. And it is the same term which we find, for example, used in chapter 11.

If we were to go there to verse 15, we say Peter is describing his encounter with Cornelius, as I began to speak. There's the term *archaion* in there again.

The Holy Ghost fell on them as in us at the beginning. Same root word, slightly different version of it. So, began and beginning. This is the way in which it is used. Again, in chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles, we read verse 7 here, when it says, When there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said, of an amendment ground no-how, a good while ago, implying, at the beginning of the Gospel, at the beginning of when the Gentiles first received it, God made use of him to bring the message to them.

[ 8 : 33 ] Where Luke uses this term in the original Greek, he uses it to indicate the outset of Gospel ministry, the first encounter of the Gospel with particular people.

And that would suggest that Manasseh of Cyprus is, he may or may not be a man of great age, but he is one who has embraced the Gospel as soon as he encountered it.

And it would imply that he is perhaps one of the overjewals outside of the disciples. Perhaps one of those who received the Gospel at the time of Pentecost.

We don't read that there were Cypriots there in Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, there's quite a considerable list, you know, Parthians and Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in other words, looking east towards Iran, Iraq, that sort of area.

And in Judea, obviously local, Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, all parts of what is now Turkey, likewise Grigia and Panthylia, in Egypt, in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, in other words, North Africa, and strangers of Rome, Jews and cross-lives, Cretes and Arabians.

[ 9 : 43 ] So those from Cretna are mentioned, those from Cyprus are not explicitly mentioned. And yet, Barnabas is one who is from Cyprus, who embraces the Gospel right away, lays down the price of his property at the feet of the Apostles, and himself is later on described as an Apostle.

So he is in the first wave. Manasseh is clearly not an Apostle, but he is obviously one who has responded positively to the Gospel at the very earliest encounter.

And perhaps also he may be one of those who, if we turn a couple of pages, we find that there are those who first brought the Gospel to Antioch, and those who, where the disciples were first called Christians.

We look at chapter 11, again, verse 19, they that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenis, that is Tyre and Sidon area, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none, but unto the Jews only.

So now the Gospel is going out to Cyprus, but some people from Cyprus have already received it, because we read, some of them were men of Cyprus, and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, which technically is Greek Jews, rather than Gentiles, although the context might imply that they are Gentiles, but technically it means Greek Jews, preaching the Lord Jesus.

[ 11 : 19 ] And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Now this is part of the explosion of the Gospel throughout the Roman world. Why do we say explosion?

Well, we've read just there in verse 19 of chapter 11 about how those who are scattered about the persecution of Stephen, all the places they travelled to, all the places they took the Gospel, every way they went, preaching the word to none, but to the Jews only.

And in Acts chapter 8, we go back to the beginning, Saul was consenting to Stephen's death, and at that time there was a great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.

How many people are we talking about here? Go back a couple more chapters, and you find in chapter 4 and verse 4, many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men, counting women and children, was about 5,000.

So even if it's only the men, and even if it's only going out to Jews, this is 5,000 missionaries with a small m, who are going out to all the places around the world, spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 12 : 32 ] So far, perhaps only to Jews, and Asa is one of those Jew from Cyprus who has received it and received it at the outset. What is he able to do to help the gospel cause?

Well, he clearly didn't sell his house in Jerusalem at the time. Maybe he wasn't in Jerusalem at the time when the gospel was first proclaimed, but he must have heard it very, very soon after.

He must have received it in the first wave of those who went out. He is an old disciple, an original disciple, how some translators put it, and it means that he is one of the most senior, if not in years, or perhaps that, certainly in the faith of the ordinary believers, the non-apostolic believers.

What is he able to do? Well, first of all, he is there, we presume. Let's take the reading that he was there at Caesarea. When Paul arrives, he may or may not have come on another ship or come separately or whatever.

We don't read in this particular journey that Paul put into Cyprus at the beginning of chapter 21. You know, he passed by Cyprus, discovered it on the left hand and sailed into Syria.

[ 13 : 45 ] They sailed past Cyprus. So, he can't have been on the same ship as Paul in that particular journey if he had just come from Cyprus. But Caesarea is where everyone would be docking, everybody would be landing, believers would come together, they would dower together, they would worship together, and he is this one who has a house, we assume, in Jerusalem.

And where he is going to lodge Paul. You would think, well, Paul doesn't need to lodge with this compartment. Nobody? He must know stacks of people in Jerusalem. He must know all the apostles up there.

He must know all the church leaders and so on. But, everything was not easy in Jerusalem for Paul. Everything was not just as you might hope, you know.

The elders and the other apostles said, you know, now see us, brother, verse 20, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law.

And they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

[ 14 : 50 ] So now this is a sort of twisting of what Paul has actually taught. He has not taught people that they are Jewish to abandon their Jewishness. What he has taught people is circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing.

It doesn't matter whether you're called to be a Christian as a Jew or as a Gentile. If you're circumcised, don't try to get whatever the operation was to try to disguise the effects of that operation.

And if you aren't circumcised, don't try and be circumcised. Don't try and become Jewish if you're Gentile. Don't try and pretend you're Gentile if you're Jewish. What matters is that you're in Christ.

He is not telling Jews to forsake Moses. He is telling everyone that they cannot be saved by those things. And whether they follow the customs of their ancient peoples, whether they're Greeks or Jews or from Asia or from Macedonia, whatever it might be, whatever customs they follow, as long as they recognize that these things will not save, it is only faith in Christ.

But this has been twisted by those who are not friends at all. They say, oh, he's busy telling the Jews they can abandon Moses and abandon the law and so on. He's not telling them that at all.

[ 16 : 03 ] But the suggestion that he is has meant that not everyone is entirely comfortable having Paul around. It perhaps would not be pوماتically possible for him to go and stay with James, leader of the Jerusalem church, for example.

Perhaps not even with Peter, who has actually disappeared from the scene now. Or with the other apostles or the other leaders of the church. He's not entirely somebody who they're comfortable having around because they think that now that he's here there's going to be a riot, there's going to be trouble, there's going to be difficulty.

Manasseh then is one who, as an original disciple, is one who almost certainly knows there is going to be trouble, but is willing, nevertheless, to put his house and home at the center of it.

He is willing to have this highly notorious, in one sense, apostle staying under his roof, having the shelter and protection of his home. By the time he meets with the leaders, apostles, and James, and so on, that's where he's staying.

He's staying at Manasseh's house. And when seven days, verse 27, which we didn't read, when seven days were almost ended, the Jews, which were of Asia, when they saw Paul in the temple, stirred up all the people and made hands on them.

[ 17 : 22 ] So by the time Paul is actually arrested, he has been a week plus with Manasseh. In other words, this is arguably, we might say, until after he is finally released from custody the first time in Rome, this is the last place he spends a night as a free man, is with Manasseh, who must know there was going to be trouble.

How do we know that he must know? Well, because if you go back to the beginning of the chapter, you see that we find there, there were, verse 4, finding disciples, we tarried there seven days.

That is Tyre. Disciples who said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem. Now, does that mean the Spirit is saying to Paul, don't go to Jerusalem?

Is he being disobedient? Or have they got a message through the Spirit what is going to happen to Paul and they are themselves saying, so don't go up to Jerusalem? Agabus, if we go on a few verses later that says, he comes down, stays with Philip the evangelist likewise, whose four daughters also prophesy, but Agabus, he took his own Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet, verse 11, and said, thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man that owned this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Now, when we heard these things, both we and me of that place be sought not to go up to Jerusalem. Is that just their personal desire, their personal choice? Or is it God speaking through the Spirit saying, don't go, Paul?

[ 18 : 56 ] So when Paul has this riot that starts, he gets arrested, he gets all the trouble that follows, is that because he was disobedient to the Spirit? I would suggest to you not, because if we turn a couple of pages again, in chapter 23, verse 11, while Paul is under arrest by the Romans, who have rescued him, we could say, from the mob, we read, the night following the Lord stood by and said, be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

This would imply that the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, is perfectly content that Paul has gone up to Jerusalem and that he has testified there that this is in line with God's intention.

He's not the disobedient. God has put his stand of approval on Paul's testimony at Jerusalem and he is further prophesying that he will likewise do so at Rome.

So the disciples then said, through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. It would appear that the Spirit has given them a premonition of what will happen and that rather than the Spirit forbidding Paul to go to Jerusalem, it's their own personal desire which likewise Luke, verse 12, and all the others have the same idea.

Don't go to Jerusalem. Don't go to Jerusalem if there's trouble there. But he's determined to go. Now while he would not be persuaded, he ceased saying, the will of the Lord be done.

[ 20 : 30 ] And after those things we took up our carriages, our luggage, our baggage, and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea and brought with them one Manasseh and Sarkis, an old disciple with whom we should lodge.

His house becomes Paul's headquarters. His house becomes the place where for the next week Paul will be a guest. He will eat there and sleep there.

He will be no doubt treated as the honored guest that he would be, but there would be that morning, a week later, when he would get up and go out through the door for the last time as a free man.

And after that, events were just overtaken. And the conveyor belt of God's province would start. And there was no getting off it. First the mob, then the intervention of the Roman soldiers, then the plot to take his life, then the transfer of him down to Caesarea, then the judgment there and the trial there, and then the appeal to Caesar, and then all the voyaging and the journey and so on, and the shipwreck, and then the journey finally to Rome, where Acts leaves it finally in Rome.

All that follows, this is the last time he still has a choice. And he lodges here with Manasseh. Now, it is inconceivable that once Paul was known to be in the city that people would not know where he would stay.

[ 21 : 58 ] Nowadays, when Christians are at the center of persecution or trouble, then the mob tends to not only attack them, they will also attack their families, they will also attack their homes, they will also attack the places where they are worshipping.

This was a very real risk for Manasseh. And yet, he is content to put his home at the apostles' disposal. His home, his life, his hospitality, such as he has, he gives.

And he gives it for this last week of Paul's freedom. and he disappears out of the storm. He doesn't disappear out of God's book of life, of course. And it's the one in whom he has trusted since first he heard the gospel, he continues to be faithful to.

But what he has, he gives. It doesn't have to be spectacular. It doesn't have to be, you know, like a Damascus road kind of change that strikes bright light into everybody's lives.

He has got something. He has got something which is of use to the kingdom. He has got this home in Jerusalem that he didn't sell in the Lord's providence, that he didn't lay the money down at the apostles' feet.

[ 23 : 07 ] There's still a base to which Christians can come, where they can be sheltered, where they can be protected and fed and housed and looked after as they go about their gospel business. He has this base for them, and that base is put at Paul's disposal.

Throughout his ministry, the apostle will find himself like Jesus before him, dependent on the hospitality and the graces of those who have this world's goods, who are prepared to share it with him and with his servants.

And Manasseh is likewise doing the same. These obseidless, that must be where his principal properties or lands or business may be. For if he has a house in Jerusalem, then he will almost certainly have servants there who are looking after it and maintaining it in his absence.

And he turns up with this crowd of disciples and principally with Paul himself. And there they will gather and there they will worship no doubt morning and evening themselves as a household before finally, on the last day of his vow, Paul is arrested and then all the providence begins to unfold.

You might say, well, it's not much that he's able to give. No, but it's all that he had. And what he had, he put at the Lord's disposal because Paul is serving the Lord.

[ 24 : 31 ] So it is at the Lord's disposal. And what we may have at our disposal, we may not think as much. We may think, oh, well, I can't make a difference in the world. There's no point in me doing anything because I can't make a difference.

The woman who came up to the temple treasure could have said, well, these are my two little mites. What are they worth? You know, look at all these rich men who are putting in their abundance. They're able to do some good. What can I do?

I might as well keep these two mites for myself. No, but she gave of herself to the Lord. Jesus said she gave all that she had. It was the last two little coppers she had to live on to get anything.

That might not have bought her much, but it might have brought her a wee piece of bread. It might have bought her perhaps the last thing she would have to eat for a long time. But no, it went in the temple treasury.

The temple treasury, which humanly speaking didn't need it and arithmetically speaking was not much enlarged or enriched by her gift. But Jesus saw that what she put in was everything she had.

[ 25 : 35 ] And that outward giving was symbolic of an inward spiritual devotion that everything was the Lord's. And likewise here from a pastor of whom we hear nothing at all after this verse and of whom we knew nothing at all before this verse.

And yet here is this key that all this time Paul is in Jerusalem for this week that he is left in peace to fulfill his vow with these other men who are in the process of going through their purification and so on.

We might say, well, why does the Lord need more weak? Why doesn't he get arrested on the second day or the third day? When the seven days were almost ended, he has gone through all that is required.

He is in a sense ritually purified as well as spiritually prepared. Well, which were of Asia? When they saw him in the temple stirred up all the people and laid hands of him.

How has he been given all this time? He's been given this week, this seven days. Seven days in Manasseh's house, seven days of hospitality, seven days of protection.

[ 26 : 44 ] And all of this is going on under the roof of this one simple Christian who makes this key contribution for Paul at Jerusalem where he has something that can be put at the Lord's disposal.

And they think, well, what do we have? What do I have? Well, maybe we have a home. Maybe we have resources. Maybe we have perhaps money we can give. Maybe we have gifts we can give. Maybe we have gifts we can use.

Or talents and abilities. Oh no, I don't have anything. Often when people say that, they think it's modesty. But all they're really doing is denying what the Lord has actually done for them.

And has actually given them. Remember the widow's mites. She took and gave all that she had. And that's the key thing that I would suggest to the Lord is looking for. It's not how much we have or what difference we think we can make.

often the biggest difference in somebody's life is made by a tiny little thing which to them seems like nothing but to the person themselves makes a huge difference to the one who receives it.

[ 27 : 52 ] It could just be a smile. It could just be that somebody speaks to them that day. It could just be that somebody gives them a kind word of help or encouragement. It could just be a little gift that doesn't make a big material difference which shows that they were being remembered.

It could be anything at all. And it could be that which to us might seem like nothing. Manasseh had a house there before. He had a house there afterwards. He would have lived in that house on and off for years.

He might go on living in it for years afterwards. But for that seven days it was the home, the base, the protection to which Paul returned every night for the last week of his life as a free man until finally the Romans would let him go the first time before they arrested him again the last time.

This is something Manasseh was able to do. It's a key thing and a key point in Paul's ministry. They he is just mentioned once. One of many disciples but he is the only one named.

But because he is named in the Lord's record of sacred story he may be assured that his contribution is likewise remembered in the Lamb's book of life.

[ 29 : 10 ] Such as he gives here is a little bit. But what I would suggest he will matter more to the Lord is the life that he gave to Christ his Saviour within which this is a small part of what he can give.

What is the small part we are able to give? What are the number of days in which we will have the opportunity to do song? When we look back at the end of our lives how many times will we think I should have done that.

I should have done that thing. I had a chance to do something. Mine would have done much but I had a chance to do something. May the Lord give us grace to use whatever he has put into our hand to put at his disposal and for the fervence of his kingdom like this single key link individual named here once and then disappearing out of the record but remembered nevertheless two thousand years later.

Let us pray.