

## Paul—Acts 21

### Paul's Arrival in Jerusalem; Mobbed by the Crowd

#### I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

- 01. Chapter 21...** “Paul's journey toward Jerusalem was now well underway. The similarities with Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem (see Luke 9:51) now become more and more evident, including the sense of doom about what will happen there (see Luke 13:33-35; 18:31-32) and the expressions of determination not to turn back. Paul will also hear warnings from many of his Christian friends not to go on into Jerusalem because of the danger there” [College Press Commentary on Acts].
- 02. 21:2...** “The ship Paul and company had been using was a 'tramp vessel,' making many stops; and here the chance to speed up their journey came through the timely availability of a ship bound directly for Tyre. As Hervey said, 'This meant the voyage would be shortened by many days’” [Coffman].
- 03. 21:4... who said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem—**“This language presents a puzzle for those who remember that in 20:22 Paul said to the Ephesian elders that he was 'compelled by the Spirit' to go to Jerusalem. Then in the next verse he said 'in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.' Does this mean the Holy Spirit was contradicting himself? It seems best to explain the warnings which came from believers along the way as accurate forecasts of coming hardships meant to test Paul's resolve. His primary message from the Spirit was that he should go on to Jerusalem. But the Spirit moved prophets in the churches to describe for him the trials he would face--messages which they took seriously--and out of personal concern for Paul tried to convince him not to go” [College Press Commentary].
- 04. 21:20... Thou seest, brother, ...** “One may only be astounded at such a statement as James made here. This very James had already publicly assented with Peter and the Twelve that they would not place upon the Gentiles 'a yoke' which neither themselves nor their fathers could bear; and here James is concerned for circumcision and keeping the 'customs.' The great error of James, the Jerusalem elders, and the majority of that church was in the supposition that God had two plans, one for Gentiles and another for Jews. The apostolic mandate lifting law-keeping from the back of the Gentiles was also the theoretical and logical lifting of it off the backs of 'all Christians'; but this had somehow been overlooked in Jerusalem. This writer can find no rational basis for supposing that James was blameless in this situation, although it was probably a blameworthiness due to ignorance of the implication of what had already been decided by the apostles, rather than of any willful disobedience” [Coffman].
- 05. 21:21... ..neither to walk after the customs—**“By 'the customs' are meant those imposed by the law, among which, as seen in their proposition to Paul, were the Nazarite vows, with their burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and meat-offerings, and, as seen in Paul's epistles, abstinence from unclean meats, and the observance of Sabbath-days, holy days, new moons, and Sabbatic years” [J.W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Acts*]. It seems to me that McGarvey has it right here about what is involved. Two thirds of this three-point definition of CUSTOMS would fall under “Romans 14-type forbearance,” it seems to me. However, I cannot see how the offering of sacrifices—with which Paul was asked

to involve himself—could be included with the other two. I agree with McGarvey that this is “the most difficult passage in Acts to understand.” The reason being, one does not wish to have to conclude that Paul did that which was wrong. However, we know that inspired men did do wrong things (e.g., Peter Gal 2:11ff).

- 06. 21:24... Take them, and purify thyself with them**—“In addition to the ceremonial requirements for the four men, Paul evidently had to participate in a purification rite for himself. He not only went with them to the temple, but he 'purified himself along with them.' In the case of Paul it seems that another requirement applied. Because he had just returned from a lengthy time of residence among Gentiles, he went to the temple to participate in a rite that involved sprinkling with water on the third and seventh days. Paul now arranged for this seven-day purification to coincide with the completion of the Nazarite vow taken by the four men. All of this could be accomplished in seven days (see 21:27). He would, however, need “to give notice” at the temple of these arrangements so that the priests could be prepared to offer the sacrifices” [College Press]. The underlined words above seem so very incongruent with all that Paul had been teaching. How could he possibly do this? It is saying that he had become UNCLEAN because of his contact with Gentile Christians. This is astounding to me in view of what Paul wrote in Gal 3:28 and other places.

## II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: **The Period of the Church.**

## III. Summary.

In this chapter we find Paul finally reaching Jerusalem. However, before reaching the city of David, he does receive another warning not to go on to Jerusalem. At Caesarea, Paul and his company spent some time in the home of Philip, the evangelist, who had four virgin daughters who prophesied. While at Philip's place, Agabus came down from Judea to speak to Paul. This man was a prophet and he proceeded to give Paul one more warning about what the Jews had in mind for him if he came to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Paul continued on to Jerusalem. He gave a report to James and all of the elders of the Jerusalem church regarding his work among the Gentiles. At verses 21-26 we have the record of something which is quite puzzling and difficult to understand. I have never been able fully to reconcile it in my own mind except to say that there was a serious mistake made by James and the elders in advising Paul to participate in the observance of certain provisions of the Law of Moses and that Paul did wrong in following their advice. Others have sought ways to look at the matter differently (cf., the discussion below under VII, 5). In the mean time, before the arrangements involving the vow had been completed (v. 27), Asian Jews have so stirred up the people in Jerusalem that they are now ready to kill Paul. He is saved by the chief captain and carried off for his own protection. Paul asked to be able to speak to the people and was granted permission to do so. As he spoke to the people, he did so in the Hebrew language.

## IV. Outline.

01. Paul resumes his journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-3).
02. Christians at Tyre warn Paul against going to Jerusalem (4).
03. A touching departure scene (5-6).
04. One day with the brethren at Ptolemais (7).
05. At Caesarea with Philip, the Evangelist (8-9).
06. Agabus dramatically warns Paul he will be bound in Jerusalem (10-12).
07. Paul is determined to go on to Jerusalem (13-16).

08. Paul reports about his work to the Jerusalem church (17-20a).
09. Paul takes a vow to conciliate Jewish Christians (20b-26).
10. Paul is seized by a mob (27-32).
11. Paul is bound and carried off by soldiers (33-37a).
12. Paul is allowed to speak to the crowd (37b-40).

## V. Questions.

### True or False

01. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul's ship stopped at Tyre in order for him to visit Christians there.
02. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul was physically carried away by soldiers.
03. \_\_\_\_\_ Luke joined in with many others in trying to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem.
04. \_\_\_\_\_ Paul was beaten at Jerusalem.
05. \_\_\_\_\_ There were some at Jerusalem who received Paul gladly.

### Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. \_\_\_\_\_ If Paul's ship was sailing east and he left Cyprus on the left hand (v. 3), Cyprus was which direction from the ship: (a) NORTH; (b) SOUTH; (c) EAST; (d) WEST.
07. \_\_\_\_\_ As Paul was being taken up the stairs to the castle, he was allowed to stop, then he beckoned with his hand, and: (a) the crowd lunged forward; (b) the chief captain struck him; (c) there was a great silence.
08. \_\_\_\_\_ With whom did Paul's company stay at Caesarea: (a) Mnason; (b) Philip the Evangelist; (c) James.
09. \_\_\_\_\_ Who stirred up the people at Jerusalem against Paul until they formed a violent mob: (a) Agabus; (b) the Pharisees; (c) Jews of Asia; (d) the chief priest.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Is there anything in the IMMEDIATE context of Acts 21 to answer the question—TO WHOM DID PHILIP'S VIRGIN DAUGHTERS PROPHECY?: (a) YES; (b) NO.

### Fill in the Blanks

11. Paul was a **Jew of \_\_\_\_\_**, a city in \_\_\_\_\_, a citizen of no \_\_\_\_\_ city.
12. Just outside the city of Tyre, Paul and others \_\_\_\_\_ on the shore, and \_\_\_\_\_.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ was the Gentile whom the Jews of Asia \_\_\_\_\_ Paul had taken into the Temple, thereby \_\_\_\_\_ it.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ said—I am ready not to be \_\_\_\_\_ only, but also to \_\_\_\_\_ for the name of the Lord Jesus.
15. The thousands of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem were \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.

*Each Question is worth 7 Points*

**My Score is:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Answers will be found on next week's handout*

**ANSWERS to Acts 20 Questions...** [(1) False, Acts 20:5; (2) False, Acts 20:34-35; (3) True, Acts 20:9; (4) True, Acts 20:29-30; (5) False, Acts 20:27-28; (6) b, Acts 20:27; (7) a, Acts 20:31; (8) b, Acts 20:8; (9) c, Acts 20:11-12; (10) b, Acts 20:16; (11) Three, months, Acts 20:3; (12) his, face, no, more, Acts 20:38; (13) long, preaching, sleep, third, Acts 20:9; (14) Holy, Ghost, Acts 20:23; (15) lying, wait, Jews, Acts 20:19.]

## VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. **AND FINDING DISCIPLES...** (Acts 21:4). *This is a good practice for Christians today!* It seems that perhaps the FIRST thing Paul's company did upon arrival at Tyre was to look for fellow Christians. Likely they knew it would be a while before the ship would be ready to depart and they wanted to assemble with the saints on the Lord's day. The mature Christian will seek out his brethren when he has to be away from his local congregation on the Lord's day (Heb 10:24-25).
2. **...AND THEY BROUGHT US ON OUR WAY, WITH WIVES AND CHILDREN...** (Acts 21:5). *It is wonderful to be a part of God's family, and to share such marvelous fellowship as is here pictured!*
  - 1) **By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another** (John 13:35).
  - 2) **Let love be without dissimulation** (Rom 12:9a).
  - 3) **And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you** (1 Th 3:12).
  - 4) **Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently** (1 Pet 1:22).
3. **...WE CAME TO PTOLEMAIS...** (Acts 21:7). *This is an interesting place.* It was originally called Accho. It was located in Galilee, 30 miles south of Tyre. It was named after Ptolemy when he was in power there. Ptolemais was located only 10 miles from Mt. Carmel, where the famous confrontation between Elijah, the prophet, and the prophets of Baal took place (1 Kings 18:17-40). It is a wonderful thing that there were faithful brethren living in this place so near one of the places where God's great power was so clearly demonstrated during the days of Elijah!
4. **...THE SAME MAN HAD FOUR DAUGHTERS, VIRGINS WHICH DID PROPHECY** (Acts 21:9). *What do we know about women prophesying?*
  - 1) Other Scriptures: Luke 2:36-38; Acts 2:18; 1 Cor 11:5.
  - 2) It is claimed by some that prophesying was preaching, thus women of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century preached.
    - 1- The word is a very GENERAL term, and may mean "to teach, refute, reprove, admonish, comfort."
    - 2- It can suggest the idea of GIVING THANKS AND PRAISING GOD.
    - 3- Thus, the word itself is not decisive.
    - 4- The meaning in a given situation is determined by CONTEXT, immediate and remote.
  - 3) Paul **limits** the extent of a woman's FORTH-SPEAKING when he writes—**But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence** (1 Tim 2:12).
    - 1- The negative conjunction NOR (*oude*) is explanatory, suggesting that the kind of teaching prohibited is that which assumes dominion over the man.
    - 2- Paul prohibits the woman from teaching and usurping authority over the man.
    - 3- Priscilla **was** involved in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26), however, Priscilla did her teaching privately, in conjunction with, her husband Aquilla, thus not violating this prohibition.
    - 4- Also, Anna is spoken of as a prophetess (Lk 2:36-38), who departed not from the temple.

- 1] Josephus says of the Temple—There was a partition built for the women that separated them from the men; this was the proper place wherein they were to worship [Wars, 5,5,2].
- 2] It is not likely, therefore, that Anna instructed men.
- 4) So then, while it is clear that some women in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century did, it is equally certain that they did not subordinate men and violate the apostles' doctrine (1 Tm 2:12), the doctrine of Christ, in so doing.
5. **TAKE THEM, AND PURIFY THYSELF WITH THEM, AND BE AT CHARGES WITH THEM, ...** (Acts 21:24-26). *Consider one of the most difficult problems in the Book of Acts.* How do we harmonize the vow taken by Paul in relation to the fact that the Mosaic Law has been nailed to the cross? What was the nature of Paul's vow? Did he sin? Why did Paul do what he did considering his very strong teaching that we are not bound by the law in Romans and Galatians? Consider some of the positions taken in regard to the problem of Paul's vow...
  - 1) It was due to Paul's lack of revelation. This position states that at the time of the events are recorded in Acts 21, Paul had not received all of what God intended to be revealed about this subject. Paul's ignorance excused his behavior here.
  - 2) It was due to Paul's lack of understanding of the revelation that was available to him. This position states that Paul had received the revelation, but he just did not understand it fully. This seems to be McGarvey's position.
  - 3) It was due to Paul giving in to the pressure and going along with the others in a hypocritical way. This position states that Paul simply did what he did "with the hand and not with the heart."
  - 4) It was due to following the orders of the elders. Paul was simply obeying the wishes of the elders and in so doing was violating the word of God, but had an excuse (cf., Otis Gatewood in Acts Commentary).
  - 5) It was due to the particular time period. The Jew was allowed to follow the Law of Moses during a special time (from Pentecost to the destruction of the Temple), thus, no sin was committed.
  - 6) It can only be explained as SIN on the part of Paul. Paul violated the will of God. He knowingly did this because he was so overcome with sadness concerning the lost condition of his countrymen (cf., Bobby Duncan in MSOP Lectures, 1985).
  - 7) Paul did not have time to sin. This position states that Paul was arrested on the day before he would have had to kill the animal sacrifice—it remains a mystery whether or not Paul would have sinned.
  - 8) Paul did it as an expediency in an attempt to relieve a tense situation with no intention whatever of substituting an animal for the Lamb of God. "If the apostle could circumcise Timothy as an expediency, with no design of associating the ritual with salvation (as was sometimes done—Acts 15:1), why could he not have done the same with reference to a sacrifice? To utilize circumcision as a matter of *salvation* was apostasy (Gal 5:2ff). To practice the rite in order to remove prejudice—in that era when the law was so freshly abolished—was an exercise of wisdom (cf., 1 Cor 9:19-23). To offer a sacrifice *redemptively* would have been wrong; but there is no proof that such was Paul's intention" [Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles: from Jerusalem to Rome*, pp. 289-90].

**VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.**

L N E V E S E H T F O E N O F E R Z Q R  
 O C T D G W S L Z E B E A J K S J C L N  
 L R V O G K N E E L E D J P W P O G S M  
 O O W J J C D I D P R O P H E S Y P N Q  
 U L N F S V A T P H O E N I C I A A C S  
 P S X T E U G E H S L Z E A F X S I Y W  
 R T R Z H H K V S A G B N K A O D R S I  
 A K O E G E D H B A S I U R N O I X A G  
 Y X R A T E S E S K R K D O A A N P T O  
 E G Y M W H B H M I B E F J R F I U N K  
 D B D E Z E G B O B A C A E C L U Y C F  
 T Z A L M A P U U R Y M M X I N R Z T S  
 X Z E A T U A J A P E A E H I B U G W X  
 B X R S Y M R S R D N J P L K T E S I Q  
 N Z M U C Z E U A E R F Q S O I J N Q V  
 Q Y A R M M S R H M O U U Z D T G F L R  
 T A I E A P U T Y E M R O O E Q P B Z U  
 W L A J F P R W U T P B T F M Y W W S Z  
 F E R V E O A O V Y O M L D U W C P U F  
 M K N S F U H I C A P H B M F C R D R L

*[The words (or word locaters) listed below are to be found in the text of our lesson. They also are found in the puzzle above. This is just one more way to reinforce what you have studied from the text. Why not read the whole verse where the word is found one more time as you do the puzzle? Thank you for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. Let's desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow (1 Pet 2:2). DRL]*

**Acts 21**

Coos, 1  
 Phoenicia, 2  
 Cyprus, 3  
 Syria, 3  
 Tyre, 3  
 Jerusalem, 4  
 kneeled, 5  
 on the shore, 5  
 prayed, 5  
 Ptolemais, 7

Caesarea, 8  
 house of Philip, 8  
 one of the seven, 8  
 four daughters, 9  
 did prophesy, 9  
 I am ready, 13  
 to die, 13  
 for the name, 13  
 Mnason of Cyprus, 16  
 James, 18