

## ACTS – Lesson 21

Acts Chapter 21

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Memory verses for this week: *1 John 2:24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

**Introduction:** In Chapter 20, Paul went to Greece, Macedonia, and later talked with the leaders at the church in Ephesus. He declared how that he had held nothing back from them, but had declared the whole word of the Lord. It ended on a sad note as he prophetically told them that they would see him no more.

In Chapter 21, Paul continues his journey back to Jerusalem. Though he is warned of trouble ahead, he proceeds. Upon arriving in Jerusalem and meeting with the leadership of the church, he learns how enemies have slandered him, alleging he had taught the scattered Jews across the land to reject their Jewish heritage and turn from the Law of Moses. Paul is then counselled by the church to prove his Jewish loyalty to his adversaries so as to remove the slander and stumbling block which was placed before many Jews in the area.

### I. Paul from Miletus to Tyre

*Acts 21:1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:*

*Acts 21:2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.*

*Acts 21:3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.*

Paul and his party continued to sail down the western coast of Asia Minor. It appears that he was upon a small coastal vessel, possibly one which he had chartered. Such a vessel typically would sail only by day and would find a port of refuge each night. They sailed to Coos which was an island not far offshore the first day and evidently anchored there for the night.

They sailed the next day to Rhodes, another noted island off the southwest point of Asia Minor. From there they sailed to Patara, a port on the mainland, on the southwest coast of Asia Minor. At Patara, they evidently purchased passage on a larger merchant vessel bound for Tyre. That ship sailed directly out onto the open

Mediterranean skirting by Cyrus on their port side as they continued their southeastward voyage to Tyre.

Tyre was a considerable port of Phoenicia which would be in present day Lebanon. There, the ship evidently was to unload its cargo and take on new cargo for its continued voyage, keeping it in port for seven days.

We see after Paul met with the elders from Ephesus, he sailed to Tyre through the cities of Rhodes, Patara, Phenicia, Cyprus, and Syria. In Tyre, they stopped to unload some of the cargo of the ship.

## **II. The Holy Ghost forbids Paul to go to Jerusalem**

*Acts 21:4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.*

While waiting in Tyre, Paul found a group of disciples, possibly an established church. They “said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.” Precisely how the Holy Spirit so revealed this is not recorded. It may be there were individuals in the church which possessed the interim gift of prophecy who revealed it to Paul.

The greater issue coming into view is the age-old controversy whether Paul stepped out of God’s will in continuing his journey to Jerusalem. In my opinion, he did not. The revelation through the Holy Ghost of trouble ahead likely was more of a warning than a prohibition. Paul already knew this as noted in 20:23. Evidently, God used persistence in warning him for what lay ahead to prepare him for the ordeal. In any event, during his coming years of arrest and imprisonment, Paul wrote a significant portion of his epistles. It would seem inordinate that the eternal Word of God would be revealed through someone out of God’s will. Rather, it is much more likely events which came to pass were by God’s providential will.

*Acts 21:5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.*

*Acts 21:6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.*

*Acts 21:7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.*

Evidently, after the ship had completed its business in unloading and taking on new cargo, it was ready to depart. Paul and his party therefore (as in Troas) met with the brethren and their families at the shore, kneeling in public prayer

together. God's people went their way as Paul boarded the ship and continued his journey down the coast.

The ship sailed only a day's voyage further south to Ptolemais and made a brief port-of-call perhaps to unload cargo destined there. Paul greeted "the brethren" there and stayed one day with them.

Last week, we talked about how Paul was pushing his schedule in order to get to Jerusalem to be there for the time of the feast. Paul finds several disciples in the city of Tyre, and they pray together. Paul's was warned by the leading of the Holy Spirit that he should not go to Jerusalem. Paul goes forth and gets on another ship to continue his journey. The people had great love and respect for Paul, and it was shown as the people came out to bid him farewell, and knelt and prayed there on the beach.

We see they entered the ship and came next to the port of Ptolemais. As was Paul's custom in most every city he went, he went down and saluted and encouraged the brethren in the city. Paul's desire was to see the church grow and reach more for the cause of Christ.

*2 Cor 11:22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.*

*2 Cor 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

*2 Cor 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*

*2 Cor 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

*2 Cor 11:26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

*2 Cor 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

*2 Cor 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

*Acts 21:8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.*

*Acts 21:9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.*

The next day, Paul and company journeyed still further south to Caesarea, whether by land or by sea we are not told. Ptolemais and Caesarea are not far apart. Philip the evangelist now lived there. He is noted as "one of the seven" which likely is a reference to him being one of the original seven deacons at the

Jerusalem church appointed in Acts 6:5. Why or when he had moved to Caesarea, we are not told. It may have had to do with the persecution which arose about Stephen in Acts 8:4.

He is called an evangelist. The mention of such would not seem to be so much a gift as a calling. Like the office of pastor and apostle noted in Ephesians 4:11, one of the offices of leadership given to the church was that of evangelist. All believers are called to witness and disciple. However, God has chosen some especially to a ministry of preaching the gospel and evangelizing the lost. Philip was such and Paul spent some time lodging with him.

No doubt, Philip brought Paul and Luke up to date on what had been going on in the churches of that region. It is recorded also that Philip had four unmarried daughters "which did prophesy." This again is an allusion to the interim gift of prophesy which faded with the completion of the New Testament Scriptures. Paul had already enjoined women to keep silence in the churches in not having public preaching or teaching ministries over men. Nevertheless, that did not preclude the Holy Spirit from working through them, particularly in women's or children's ministries.

The next day Paul and his company depart and come unto Caesarea, the city where the evangelist Phillip lived. He was one of the seven that had been chosen to serve the church in Jerusalem before the great persecution.

*Acts 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:*

*Acts 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.*

It says that Phillip was chosen to be a deacon in the church there in Jerusalem before God called him into the ministry. After that he preached in Samaria.

*Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his 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 Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

*Acts 8:2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.*

*Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.*

*Acts 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*

*Acts 8:5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*

*Acts 8:6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

We also remember in our studies how that Phillip caught up to the eunuch in the chariot and preached to him Jesus Christ. Afterwards he baptized the man, meaning that he had been given such authority by the church there in Jerusalem. This means he was called as a minister, since deacons are not commanded to preach. Every Christian should witness for the Lord, but preachers are called of God.

*Acts 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

*Acts 8:27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,*

*Acts 8:28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

*Acts 8:29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*

*Acts 8:30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*

*Acts 8:31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*

*Acts 8:32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:*

*Acts 8:33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.*

*Acts 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?*

*Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

*Acts 8:36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*

*Acts 8:37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

It says that Paul and his company abode at Phillip's house until they left Caesarea. At this time, we saw an Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in the case of Phillip's four daughters.

*Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:*

*Joel 2:29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.*

It would have to be assumed that they spoke and prophesied before women, as the scriptures teach that the woman is not to speak in the church.

*1 Cor 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*

*1 Cor 14:35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*

Many churches ignore these verses today, and we see many women being ordained as pastors. From these scriptures and the ones concerning the qualifications for a pastor, it appears that God's Word is not their basis for their decisions.

### **III. The Holy Spirit warns Paul through Agabus**

*Acts 21:10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.*

*Acts 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.*

*Acts 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

Though Paul desired to arrive in Jerusalem prior to Pentecost they spent more days than anticipated at Caesarea with Philip. While there, a prophet from Judaea by the name of Agabus arrived. This is the same prophet who had travelled from Jerusalem to the church at Antioch in Acts 11:28 and had issued a prophecy of impending famine around Jerusalem.

Once again, the Holy Spirit through this prophet revealed to Paul how he would be bound in Jerusalem. Agabus used a simple object lesson. He took Paul's girdle which was a belt-like piece of cloth worn to gird a man's garment about him. He bound his own hands and feet therewith and uttered the warning that "thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

Again, this likely was not a prohibition by the Holy Spirit to Paul. Rather, it would seem to be another warning of what awaited him there. It should be recalled, the

purpose for Paul's journey to Jerusalem was to deliver a financial gift to assist the church there during its time of difficulty. He had gone to great lengths in receiving this offering from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, particularly prodding the Corinthian church to follow through on their promise to assist.

In his writing the Corinthians, he had noted that he had gone to great pains to see to it this significant financial assistance would be delivered with all propriety and integrity. Paul's integrity and word were at stake. He had to complete his mission to Jerusalem as promised to the sending churches of Greece. See II Corinthians 8-9. Luke and Paul's other associates, perhaps not realizing the sense of duty incumbent upon Paul to personally oversee his mission, also took up the warning. Nevertheless, Paul remained adamant.

Paul and his group were here several days when a prophet from Judea named Agabus come up to them. We do not know if the man was sent directly by God for the purpose of persuading Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but we do know God works all things after the counsel of His own will.

*Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

*Eph 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

We see Agabus takes hold on Paul's girdle and bound him signifying that this would happen to him if he went into Jerusalem. The brethren speak up to encourage him not to go, but Paul is persuaded in his mind that he will go even if it meant his death.

### **Matthew Henry had this to say about these scriptures:**

Here appeared a commendable affection to Paul, and a value for him upon account of his great usefulness in the church. Good men that are very active sometimes need to be dissuaded from overworking themselves, and good men that are very bold need to be dissuaded from exposing themselves too far. The Lord is for the body, and so must we be. Yet there was a mixture of infirmity, especially in those of Paul's company, who knew he undertook this journey by divine direction, and had seen with what resolution he had before broken through the like opposition. Paul reproves them for dissuading him. They love Paul dearly, and therefore oppose his resolution; he loves them dearly, and therefore chides them for opposing it. They were an offence to him, as Peter was to Christ, in a like case, when he said "Master, spare thyself." Fortunately, Paul was of a very tender spirit." However, after two warnings, we see he goes forth to Jerusalem.

*Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*Acts 21:14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.*

Paul's associates persisted in warning of the impending arrest. He asked them why they sought to break his heart with their apparent weeping. The character, integrity, and duty of Paul stood like a rock. He said, "for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Considering all he had undergone over the preceding years, the warning of more trouble at Jerusalem was not troubling enough to make any difference. He had been through it before. He was willing to face it again. Indeed, he would. Upon stating his resolve, his associates stopped trying to dissuade him. All they could do was commit him and the matter to God's will.

*Acts 21:15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.*

*Acts 21:16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.*

*Acts 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.*

Paul, along with several disciples from Caesarea, including "an old disciple" from Cyprus named Mnason packed up and journeyed on to Jerusalem. They apparently would lodge in Jerusalem with Mnason. Paul and his party packed their bags. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, the brethren of the church received them all gladly.

When the disciples could not persuade Paul not to go, they said, "The will of the Lord be done." When we can not make someone understand, this is the best course of action. We see when they depart for Jerusalem, they take an old disciple named Mnason of Cyprus with them. As was the case in most every city Paul went, he and his company were warmly received by the brethren there in Jerusalem.

#### **IV. Paul Takes a Jewish Vow concerning Jewish Sacrifice**

*Acts 21:18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.*

*Acts 21:19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.*



The next day, Paul along with Luke (and perhaps the others) met with James the pastor of the church along with the other elders. The term elders in the context likely refers to the assistant pastors and missionaries of the church at Jerusalem. Of all places, the early church in Jerusalem did not have their own building and met in numerous homes across the city. Each of these locations had at least one leader under the oversight of James. They were the elders of the church at Jerusalem. Paul proceeded to declare particularly what God had done through his ministry among the gentiles since his last visit to the city some years earlier (Acts 18:22).

When Paul declared the great things God had done among the Gentiles, it brought great joy to the brethren, and they glorified God for it. When we hear of souls being saved by missionaries we support in our church, it brings great happiness to us. To have a small part in these ministries allows us to share in the happiness of one more soul being saved for eternity.

*Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:*

*Acts 21:21 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.*

The leadership of the church glorified God for what they heard. They then proceeded to pass on bad news to Paul. Though there were literally thousands of Jewish believers in Jerusalem and in the surrounding area, they for the most part remained “zealous of the law.” The enemies of Paul had spread slanderous rumors how he had traveled throughout the Jewish diaspora teaching “all Jews . . . to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.”

As in the case of much slanderous gossip, there is a grain of truth to build on. Paul had taught gentiles that they need not observe the Law, circumcise their children, or observe distinctly Jewish customs. However, he had never so instructed Jews, even Christian Jews, to neglect their cultural heritage. To zealous observant Jews of the first century living in the shadow of the Temple at Jerusalem, such a charge, if true, was utter treason.

Even immature Jewish believers evidently had difficulty with such news. The Jewish mind set of the day was that even gentiles ought to submit themselves to the Law of Moses and become a proselyte in observing all the details of the Law. Paul, therefore, had become an abhorrence to the mainstream Jewish world. His enemies had taken what no doubt was only incomplete information about him and distorted it into a scandal.

*Acts 21:22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.*

*Acts 21:23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;*

*Acts 21:24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.*

The leadership of the church urged Paul to take steps to neutralize the charges. . They knew word would spread that he was in town. Some take the position how the word multitude (plhyov plethos) refers to the multitude of Jews in general. Others take the position it refers to the multitude of believing Jews of the church there. The brethren” of the church had already gladly received Paul as noted in verse 17. Therefore, the multitude likely is a reference to the unbelieving multitude of the city.

The leadership of the Jewish church at Jerusalem urged Paul to place himself under a Jewish vow (possibly a Nazarite vow—see Numbers 6:13-15). Four men in the church were already in the process of so doing.

*Num 6:13 And this is the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:*

*Num 6:14 And he shall offer his offering unto the LORD, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings,*

*Num 6:15 And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings.*

Typically, men would undertake such a vow for a specified number of days, usually thirty, first shaving their heads so there would be no need for a haircut in the meantime. They urged Paul to so place himself under such a Jewish vow.

It should be noted that though Paul clearly taught that gentile believers were under no obligation to observe Jewish customs, he himself as a Jew still voluntarily observed various Jewish customs. This, no doubt in part, was not to be a stumbling block to the Jews. Also, in part, it probably had to do with loyalty to his cultural heritage. They further encouraged Paul to personally underwrite the expenses of these other Jewish believers who were about to observe a vow. This no doubt was to further exemplify his sincerity.

It has been said by some that Paul’s father had passed away and he had inherited his father’s estate, becoming independently wealthy in his latter years.

There is no scriptural proof of this, though it would seem to make sense considering the church urged him to underwrite these others at his own expense. There is the possibility that an offering was taken for the expense though not mentioned.

The point of course was to demonstrate that he, Paul, still kept the law and walked orderly as a Jew. This measure was to remove the slander which had become a stumbling block for Paul at Jerusalem for the believing Jews. These actions might defuse the antagonism against Paul by the unbelieving Jewish establishment.

*Acts 21:25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.*

*Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.*

The church leadership reiterated to Paul that they did not hold gentiles under the Law. They restated to Paul the four restrictions which they had laboriously hammered out in the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15.

The next day, Paul along with the four others began the procedural ceremonial process of ritual purification at the Temple. When that was complete, they would thereby offer the appropriate sacrifices—at Paul's expense.

We see that thousands of Jews were at Jerusalem who were saved and also zealous for the law. We see that the disciples suggest that Paul prove to the people that he is alright by going into the temple and make a vow and pay their bill. They knew that Paul had taught the Gentiles that they did not need to be circumcised to be saved.

*1 Cor 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.*

*Gal 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

*Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Why Paul agreed to do this, I don't know. It did not work. But Paul tried his best to pacify the Jews to follow the truth.

J. Vernon McGee had these comments about these verses.

“The Jews twisted a little what Paul was actually doing and teaching. We come now to another interesting passage about which good Bible expositors offer different explanations. Was Paul out or in the will of God when he went to Jerusalem and took a Jewish vow that evidently involved a sacrifice. These Jews who had found their completion in Jesus Christ had not forsaken the Mosaic Law. However, they could not insist that Gentiles must come under the Law. On the other hand, Gentiles could not insist that the Jews forsake the practices of the Law—provided they were not trusting them for salvation. Those who insist that the grace of God did not force the Gentiles to keep the Mosaic Law seem to forget that the same grace permits the Jew to continue in its precepts if he feels it is the will of God. Paul had made it very clear in his teachings that meat does not commend us to God.”

*1 Cor 8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.*

*1 Cor 8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

I think it all comes down to the zeal Paul had to reach all men.

*1 Cor 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

*1 Cor 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

*1 Cor 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

*1 Cor 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

*1 Cor 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

## **V. Paul seized in the Temple by the Jews**

*Acts 21:27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,*

*Acts 21:28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.*

*Acts 21:29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)*

*Acts 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.*

As the initial seven days of Paul's Nazarite vow were ending, Jews from Asia (the region of Ephesus) recognized him in the Temple. He apparently was making the final sacrifices for himself and the four other brethren as prescribed by the Law. The Jews from Asia, like Paul, were there for the spring holy season, now approaching Pentecost.

Some have speculated that the ring leader of the attack against Paul may have been Alexander of Ephesus, possibly Alexander the coppersmith noted in II Timothy 4:14.

*2Ti 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:*

*2Ti 4:15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.*

Whoever it was, they quickly accosted Paul and sought help from the throngs of other Jews in the Temple. They accused Paul of being the one who had allegedly spoken against Judaism throughout the Roman world. Paul by now had a reputation which preceded him among observant Jews at Jerusalem. Now, they heard he was in their midst.

He had not been to Jerusalem in years and was no longer known by face to the local populace. This was particularly true with his head shaved. Moreover, they accused him of bringing a gentile into the Temple. There was a gentile court of which gentile seekers were allowed. However, they were not allowed into the Temple proper until they had been circumcised and become fully a Jew.

Because Paul had been seen with Trophimus, it was assumed he had brought him into the Temple itself. The charges stirred an uproar. Quickly a mob mentality overtook the situation. They swiftly removed Paul out of the Temple to do their deed, and as soon as they were past the gates, the Levites within shut the doors, not wanting bloodshed to defile the Temple.

*Acts 21:31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.*

*Acts 21:32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.*

Their intent was simple. They planned to kill Paul. They already were beating him mercilessly. The roar of the mob caught the attention of the Roman authorities garrisoned adjacent to the Temple in the fortress-castle Antonia. The chief captain (ciliarcov chiliarchos—later noted as Claudius Lysias in Acts 23:26) promptly ordered “soldiers and centurions” into the fray who immediately intervened.

As the mob of Jewish zealots noticed the large armed contingent of brightly armored Roman troops rushing on-the-double toward them, they prudently left beating of Paul. The fact that centurions are noted in the plural would indicate several hundred troops were dispatched to the scene.

It was the Jews from Asia that identify Paul. They bring the charge against Paul for bringing a Gentile into the temple. Having seen him with Trophimus, they supposed Paul had brought him into the temple. This was not the case at all. When we accuse someone, we need to be certain of the facts. This caused a riot and Paul was almost beaten to death. Fortunately, Paul was rescued by the Roman soldiers.

## **VI. Paul is Bound with Chains**

*Acts 21:33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.*

*Acts 21:34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.*

*Acts 21:35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.*

*Acts 21:36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.*

The Roman commander (the chiliarchos) promptly arrested Paul, had him bound, and demanded to know what was going on. Some in the mob yelled one thing, others something else. In the uproar, many did not even know what was going on. The Roman officer therefore ordered him to be taken to the castle. Though Paul initially was led away on foot, the vehemence of the mob was such, the soldiers finally picked him up and carried him up the stairs to their castle. Meanwhile, the mob snapped at their heels yelling, "Away with him."

The chief captain takes Paul and commands that he be bound in chains. He demands to know who he is and where he was from. When he could not hear for the shouting of the people, he commands that they take Paul into the castle.

*Acts 21:37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?*

*Acts 21:38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?*

*Acts 21:39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.*

As they entered the relative quiet and safety of the Roman fortress, Paul spoke to the chief captain and requested that he might speak directly to him. The Roman commander was taken aback hearing Paul speak to him in Greek. The officer had initially assumed Paul was an Egyptian who had harassed the Roman occupying forces with thousands of fellow rebels. He was additionally wanted for murder. Paul rather hastily rehearsed his stock. He was (1) a Jew from (2) Tarsus, a city in Cilicia noted for its university and culture. Moreover, (3) he was even a citizen of that significant city. Paul then requested permission of the Roman officer to speak to the snarling mob below.

When Paul was about to be led away, he asks for the right to speak to the people. The chief captain thinks Paul is the Egyptian which had caused trouble before and led 4,000 murderers into the wilderness.

*Acts 21:40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,  
Act 22:1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.*

Paul, standing on the elevated stairway leading into the Roman fortress adjacent to the Temple, held his hand up for them to quiet down. With the Romans ready to enforce the peace, the mob suddenly became silent. Paul began to speak to the throng “in the Hebrew tongue.”

This is an unfortunate break in a chapter, as Paul begins to speak to the people. But we will get into what he says in next week’s lesson.

J. Vernon McGee said this:

Although Paul speaks to the captain in Greek, when he addresses this Jewish mob, he speaks in their native tongue, Hebrew. And the minute he begins to address them in Hebrew, the language they love and understand, they listen to him.

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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