

ACTS CHAPTER 21
Text with Charles Pinkney's Commentary
Paul Returns from the Third Missionary Journey to Jerusalem

21:1 - - Warnings on the Journey to Jerusalem

21 Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following *day* to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, (*Phoenicia is present day Lebanon.*) we went aboard and set sail. 3 When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. 4 And finding disciples,[a] we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. 6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

Paul meets several disciples in Tyre as he concludes his return voyage to Jerusalem. This leg of travel will complete the third of Paul's missionary voyages. Jerusalem is the final point of termination. Exactly who the disciples in Tyre consist of is not clear but they are probably some of the early church in Jerusalem who went various ways after the serious persecution that followed the death of James, the overseer of the Jerusalem ekklesia. These believers were likely acquainted with Paul's conversion and devotion to his ministry which followed. It could well be that these disciples had even been in fellowship with him in earlier times. The Holy Spirit was prompting Paul of the dangers that would await him if he were to return to Jerusalem. Paul does not regard the warning in any way to save himself from possible destruction but goes on with a conviction that he must take this path despite the dangers that surely await. (see vs. 14 below)

7 And when we had finished *our* voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next *day* we who were Paul's companions[b] departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him. *Remember, Philip was among the brethren at the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit when the church was birthed. He, along with Stephen the martyr, attended to the ministry of the flock in this first growing fellowship. Later he traveled as an evangelist to Samaria where many converts were added. The account of his supernatural call to minister to the Ethiopian eunuch brought Christianity to that nation where it exists to this day. His miraculous translation from Gaza was among the amazing signs and wonders notable in the first church. By now some 20 years after the first church was born, Philip has gone on to have a family, married with some exceptional daughters. No doubt his spirit – empowered ministry had continued to be fruitful in the region of Caesarea.*

9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

We have heard about the prophet Agabus earlier in the book of acts. He prophesied about the famine which would impact the region. He was a true prophet whose foretellings were true and came to pass.

12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." *Was Paul in the will of God to resist the warnings of the Spirit of God? Or was the Spirit's warning only a way of testing Paul's resolve to give all to the cause of Christ Jesus?*

Paul Urged to Make Peace

15 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. 17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. *James the overseer of the church of Jerusalem is the half brother of Jesus. He is one of the sons of Mary and Joseph and a brother to Jude the apostle.*

<http://www.churchhistory101.com/century1-p6.php> -- *"According to The history given by Luke, James is barely mentioned again, and Peter is absent. In chapter 21 Paul makes another visit to Jerusalem to meet with the leadership and the only name mentioned is James. Other than the letter attributed to James, he is only mentioned three times in all of the NT. How did James become the leader of the Church in Jerusalem? The answer comes from an early church tradition recorded in Eusebius' Church History. Eusebius quotes from some earlier writings that now only exist through his quotations."*

19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; 21 but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. 22 What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will[[c](#)] hear that you have come. 23 Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. 24 Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. 25 But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing,[[d](#)] except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

The remnants of Judaic practices continue in Jerusalem intermingled with the gospel of Grace and the identification of Yeshua Jesus as Messiah (Lord) and Savior. The practice of making vows continued in this account. (Matt.5.33) Jesus himself commanded no vows should ever be made. Grace will no doubt allow Jews to practice liberty in this kind of practice because, after all, grace is not strict adherence to any law! Below you will read of the fellowship of temple practices that was still being practice among the Jewish believers.

Arrested in the Temple

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

The keeping of the "feasts of the Lord" were still being commemorated by the believers who now understand that they are in fact honoring the Messiah. (The Lord's Feasts.) This was the festival that Paul was eager to be present for before he returned to Jerusalem. Acts 18:21 "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus. "The seven days mentioned here likely place the feast of the fall feast series, Trumpets, Booths and Tabernacles.

27 Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29 (For they had previously[e] seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) *Here the 'bounty hunters' " or the "posse" has finally tracked down the trouble-maker Paul and are finally ready to deal justice to this defiler of the faith of Moses and the law. We can see the building intensity of the determination to bring this evil doer (Paul) to justice.*

30 And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. 31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. *(This is a replay of the riotous turmoil that followed the arrest of Jesus and then Stephen. Though the events are separated by more than twenty years we see the same players at odds with one another.)* So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!" *(The Roman soldiers are the buffer between Paul and the angry mob of Jews.)*

Addressing the Jerusalem Mob

37 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" *(Paul is mistakenly thought to be another person who led a previous insurrection, for in the Roman officer's mind this sounds like another matter of revolt against Roman rule.)*

39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people." 40 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to *them* in the Hebrew language.