



## Acts

### Lesson 20, Chapter 21

*Paul's third and final missionary journey consisted of backtracking over most of the regions of his second journey with a few alternate routes along the way. The purpose was to revisit the churches he had already established on his first and second journeys, and also to collect money from the Gentile believers to take as a love gift from them to the suffering church in Jerusalem. Paul saw this not only as an obligation for the Gentiles, but as an opportunity to bridge the gap between Jew and Gentile to unite the church in love. While on his third journey, in the city of Corinth, he wrote of this to the believers in Rome whom he later intended to visit. "But now I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things." Romans 15:25-27.*

*In chapter 21, Paul sails on for Jerusalem with a few short stops along the way. He and his men eventually land at Tyre in Syria. They stay with the believers in Tyre for 3 days, and are warned not to go to Jerusalem. While staying with Phillip, one of the first seven deacons of the church, they are warned by the prophet Agabus that Paul faces great danger in Jerusalem. Even the threat of death would not keep Paul from finishing the course set before him.*

*Finally arriving in Jerusalem, they met with the brothers and elders of the church there to report the work that had been accomplished among the*

*Gentiles. Though the leaders were excited about all the missionaries had accomplished, there was something more pressing they wanted to discuss. They also recognized the danger of Paul being in Jerusalem. The danger was the result of rumors that were being circulated regarding Paul's teaching. Many of the Jews who had become believers were intent on keeping the Law as part of their salvation. They believed that Paul was teaching Jews to give up their Jewish heritage (the Law, Moses etc.), and to no longer keep the Jewish ceremonies and celebrations. Though the elders had sent out the declaration that freed Gentile believers from most obligations of the Law (Acts 15), the Jews still considered themselves bound to them. The doctrine of salvation by grace was still not fully understood by most believers. Because of this, Paul was considered a traitor and an apostate to many fellow Jews. This was the danger that awaited Paul in Jerusalem. To convince the Jews that Paul was still faithful to Jewish customs, the leaders asked him to take some men to purify themselves to fulfill a vow they had taken. Paul agreed and went through purification process to prove his sincerity. Unfortunately, those who were determined to see him dead proceeded to slander him and dragged him out of the Temple to beat him. The mob was interrupted by the Roman guards who stepped in, arrested Paul, and removed him from the area. All the warnings about the trouble he would face in Jerusalem were coming true.*

READ CHAPTER 21

1. *Mark the cities Paul traveled through in verses 1-3 and 7-8 on your map. Using your scale of miles, approximately how many miles did they travel just on this last leg of their journey?*
  
2. *Why do you think Paul didn't heed the warning that so many had given him not to go to Jerusalem? 21:4, 11-12*
  
3. *What other prophecy had Agabus given in Acts 11:27-28? Describe his warning to Paul now.*
  
4. *The vow referred to in verses 23-24 was probably a Nazarite vow. What did they want Paul to do regarding the vow, and why did they want him to do it? 21:23-24*
  
5. *What were the two things Paul was accused of doing by the Jews from Asia? Was he guilty of these charges? Explain. 21:26-29*
  
6. *When had Paul been accused of this before, and what do you think Paul was teaching that would cause people to believe this? Acts 16:5-17*
  
7. *How was Paul's life saved from the mob? 21:30-33*

8. *Who did the commander think Paul might be? 21:37-38*



*The Roman official wrongly identified Paul as an Egyptian who was a false prophet that several years earlier had promised to drive out the Romans. Before he could do so, his forces were attacked and routed by Roman troops led by governor Felix. Though several hundred of his followers were killed or captured, he managed to escape. The “Assassins” called “sicarri,” were a terrorist group whose Jewish nationalism led them to murder Romans and Jews perceived as sympathetic to Rome. Since they often used the cover of a crowd to stab their victims, the commander assumed the mob had caught on their leaders in the act.*  
*MacArthur Study Bible*

9. *Why do you think Paul wanted to speak directly to the people, and why did he choose to speak in Hebrew (Aramaic)? 21:39-40*

10. *This situation is the result of gossip, misunderstanding, false accusations, and overreactions combined with religious convictions. Have you ever experienced negative situations that came about for these reasons, and what is it about religious convictions that seem to bring on these responses frequently? How might this kind of suffering affect a person’s faith?*

***Prayer requests:***

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***Group time notes:***

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