

Paul Goes To Jerusalem

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 21. Acts chapter 21.

This begins the last major section of the book of Acts. Acts chapter 21. When we finished chapter 20, Paul had been talking to the Ephesian elders, and you notice kind of a transition.

Paul went from being their leader, being their example, being their mentor, to now he is giving the responsibility to them, saying, now this is your flock.

Feed the flock, shepherd the flock, and God has given you and made you overseers of. And so he is making them aware of the responsibility that they have. He's reminding them of how he's led them and the example he's provided for them.

And he has now put the responsibility on their shoulders. And so they go to, they have prayer, they go to the ship, and that's where the chapter ends.

[1 : 26] And so we begin in verse 1 of chapter 21. 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 Petara.

And finding a ship sailing over unto Phoenicia, we went aboard and set forth. 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 unlaid her burden.

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

And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship, and they returned home again. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais and saluted the brethren and abode with them one day.

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.

[2 : 43] And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. As we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus. 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 of Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean you 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.

And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. And after those days, we took up our carriages and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea and brought with them one Mason of Cyprus, an old disciple with whom we should lodge.

And we were come to Jerusalem. When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And so Paul is going to finally arrive at Jerusalem.

He has stated his intention of going to Jerusalem a few chapters ago. Actually, in chapter 20, he mentioned it. And then he is now going to get there.

[4 : 04] He's going to arrive at Jerusalem. And a lot of controversy among commentators is did Paul make a mistake by going there? Some say he did.

Some say he didn't. In fact, I looked at the I looked at 14 different sources over the week and trying to compare who was saying what and how many were going one way, how many were going another.

And out of 14 sources, 11 said Paul did the right thing by going to Jerusalem. Two said Paul made a mistake. And one said if Paul made a mistake, he made a mistake with the best of motives and the best of intentions.

His heart was in the right place even if he made a mistake. And he made a mistake based, if he did, he made it with an overwhelming concern for the people of Israel, of Jerusalem.

And so commentators are split on whether or not he made a mistake. So when you have questionable things like that, the best thing to do is read on, see if the scripture adds any clarity a little bit later.

[5 : 13] And so that's what we'll try to do. I think there are some things that we'll see a little bit later that will let us know if it was a mistake or not. And so when you look at verse four, when who said, when the disciples who said through the spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem, you have to ask yourself a question.

Are they saying inspired, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Paul, you should not go to Jerusalem? Or are they saying as a result of what the spirit has revealed to them, Paul should not go to Jerusalem because they're afraid of what awaits him there.

And so we'll try to clarify that as we move through the passages to follow. But Paul is determined to go to Jerusalem. Paul had a very strong purpose of going there.

For one, he was taking up a collection. He had been receiving a collection to give back to the Jewish church there in Jerusalem. The Jews there in Jerusalem that had become believers that had started the church there, he has taken a collection to them because they're struggling financially.

And he had been gathering this collection as part of his missionary journeys, and he wanted to deliver it to them himself. He wanted to be the one that personally delivered it to them because remember the fact that they're in such shape financially was partially his doings prior to his conversion.

[6 : 31] And so Paul is wanting to go make this right, so to speak. He's wanting to take this collection to them personally and deliver it to them.

And we're going to see that in doing so, Paul really nearly gets himself in trouble, not with so much in prison, but he gets almost in trouble with the Lord as something he does in the temple.

And we'll see that next week, the Lord willing. And so here is Paul going to Jerusalem. And also not only did he want to deliver this collection that he had been gathering for the people, but he really cared about the Jewish people.

Paul had a love, Paul had a concern for his own people. Now you read Romans chapter 9, the first verse, Paul said, I have this heaviness of heart.

I so much want to see my people, the Jews, converted, that if I would be willing to be accursed for them, if it would lead to their conversion.

[7 : 36] So Paul is using very strong terminology here. He's saying, if I could myself, if I could be cut off from God, and I could be under the curse of God and under the judgment of God, if doing that would save them, I would be willing to do it.

That's the love he had for these Jewish people. That's the love he had for the people of Jerusalem. He was willing to be accursed. He was willing to be separated from God and face judgment if that would lead to their salvation.

Romans chapter 9, he says that, if I could be accursed for my people, I would do that if it would lead to their salvation. But of course, Jesus has already borne that curse, and if that doesn't lead to their salvation, nothing will.

But it does show you the love that Paul had for these people, willing to give his own self, put his own self under the judgment of God if it would result in their salvation. And so Paul had a deep concern.

He had a deep love for the people of Jerusalem, for the Jewish people, and that motivated him. And he's also thinking, you know, pre-conversion, think of all the trouble people lived in Jerusalem in fear of him.

[8 : 45] People were literally afraid of him because they knew he would come after them if they were professing the name of Christ. And so he is wanting to, he's wanting to kind of make amends.

He's wanting to make that right. And so he has that love for these people. And so he is determined, he is determined to go to Jerusalem. But on the way, he goes, he's basically going from one little place on the shore, he's basically going down, down the shore, and then he's going to sail past Cyprus.

And so Cyprus he had went to before on his first missionary journey with Barnabas. That was one of the first places they went. But he is going to sail, and it says they left it on the left hand.

So basically that's telling us he sailed south of Cyprus. And it says, and finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set forth.

Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand. So they sailed south of Cyprus and sailed into Syria and landed at Tyre, for the ship was to unlaid her burden.

[9 : 50] So one question that comes to mind is they're landing well south of Antioch. Antioch was Paul's sending church. And so Paul knows he's going to Jerusalem.

Paul knows he's going to probably be arrested and put in prison there, may even be killed at Jerusalem. But he bypasses his sending church altogether. Not sure why. The only thing we can figure is that earlier, a few chapters ago, we were told that Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost.

So maybe he was hurrying to get through there. He didn't have time to go through Antioch. But he lands in Tyre, which is on the coast, but it's well south of Antioch and it's northwest of Jerusalem.

And so they're going to hop down the coast a few times and they're going to land finally at Caesarea. Caesarea was the major port for those wanting to go to Jerusalem. It was the closest major port coming from the west toward Jerusalem.

That would have been the most efficient way to get to Jerusalem was to land at Caesarea. And there at Caesarea, we encounter Philip. Now we've not seen Philip for a long time.

[10 : 54] The last time we saw Philip was back in chapter 8. Remember, he had been preaching in Samaria and a great work had been done there and then the Lord sent him out into the road going down to Gaza, a very deserted desert place.

And there he met the Ethiopian eunuch. And the Ethiopian eunuch was converted and that's the last we really read of Philip. But Philip was one of the seven deacons that were appointed in Acts chapter 6 to care for the widows of the church.

And so Philip, the evangelist, as what he's called here, Paul is going to stay with him for some time. Now verse 9 causes some controversy with people and causes some interesting discussions.

And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. So he had four daughters that were prophetesses. They prophesied. And people try to make way more out of that than what I think is intended.

But I think what we need to focus on there is back in chapter 2. On the day of Pentecost when Peter had preached and 3,000 were saved, the Holy Spirit had descended, baptized the church into one body, they quoted from Joel's prophecy.

[12 : 06] Said this is that which was spoken of the prophet Joel. And in part of that prophecy, what did it say? It said your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. And so this is showing again a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

Now what did Joel's prophecy indicate? When those things happened, you were in the last days. So basically, this is just another sign that the last days as was prophesied by the prophet Joel had begun.

And they were in those last days. We think last days, we think of a short span of time. But the last days so far have lasted about 2,000 years. The last days started with the inauguration of the new covenant, the birth of the church, the Holy Spirit being sent to birth the church.

And that's the start of the last days because that's how God is going to gather a people to himself from every tribe, tongue, kindred, and nation through the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel going out into all the world.

And so that is just another verification of Joel's prophecy that this was the last days because in those last days your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

[13 : 16] And so that's what's happening here. Then in verse 10, and as we tarried many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus. Now we've met Agabus before.

One time back in chapter 11, he had prophesied that there would be a famine. And that famine would happen under the reign of Claudius Caesar. And history tells us that it did. That famine happened during those days.

And as a result, the church at Antioch was helping the church in Jerusalem by sending gifts and sending supplies to them to prepare for that time.

And so Agabus has proven himself as a prophet. He had said, you know, this is going to happen and it did. That's how you test the prophet back in the day. If they said something and it didn't happen, their day just got real bad because they normally got stoned.

If you said you were a prophet and you said this is going to happen, this is a prophecy from the Lord and it didn't happen, then your day went badly after that. But he had said, you know, this prophecy and it happened.

[14 : 18] So he had proven himself to really be speaking under the inspiration and the power of the Lord. He had spoken this prophecy and it had happened so we can depend on Agabus. And so here is Agabus.

He comes and he's going to kind of step into the role of an Old Testament prophet. If you read some of the Old Testament prophets, they did some unusual things.

If you read Isaiah when he wanted to prophesy certain things, the Lord had him to do some things that probably wouldn't go well in today's culture. Ezekiel, the Lord had him to do some strange things to illustrate and to actually kind of pantomime to the people this prophecy, kind of act it out what was going to happen.

And so if you read Ezekiel, the Lord had him lay on his side for a long time. The Lord had him to basically encompass an area of Jerusalem to act out certain things.

And so the Lord spoke that way through prophets in the Old Testament. In fact, the Lord had Isaiah to walk through the street unclothed at one point to illustrate a point of how they were going to be stripped down to nakedness, to nothing.

[15 : 31] And so the Lord had his prophets in the Old Testament to do things and they would act it out to show the people so they would have a visual of what's going on because a lot of things, a lot of times if you hear something, you might forget it.

But if you see and hear something, you're activating more senses of your mind and you're going to remember stuff you see a lot better and it's going to have more of an impact a lot of times.

And so that's why a lot of times the Old Testament prophets would act out certain things in front of the people so that would give them a visual and they would in their mind, yeah, that's what the prophet was telling us.

And so Agabus is going to do that. He takes Paul's girdle, which could have been something as simple as a belt of some sort or maybe even a money belt, and he took it and bound his own hands and feet and said, thus said the Holy Ghost, so shall all the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And so this is Agabus saying, here's what's going to happen. Whoever owns this belt, this girdle, you get to Jerusalem, you're going to be bound up, you're going to be handed over to the Gentiles.

[16 : 42] And now fast forward, what happens? Spoiler alert, Paul goes to Jerusalem, he's going to get arrested, he's going to end up in Rome. And so this is, this prophecy will come, come true as well.

And so here is another word from the Lord saying, here's what awaits you in Jerusalem. Now is Agabus saying, Paul, you should not go to Jerusalem. Is he saying, Paul, you're being commanded not to go?

Or is he saying, Paul, when you get there, this is going to happen. And so it seems to me that he's saying, this is what's going to happen when you get there. And so it says, thus says 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.

And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. And so Paul is now hearing from these people that don't go.

And notice the word we. Luke is including himself in here. Luke is saying, he's joining this group saying, Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. You're going to get in trouble if you go there.

[17 : 46] 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.

And so the word ready there is the idea of being in a state of readiness. This was his way of life. He lived his life ready to even give his life for the Lord if necessary.

And so he was not only ready to go and be bound, but he was ready to die if necessary. And this is his state of mind. This is his state of life.

He lived in that condition of being ready to give his life, to be bound in prison for the sake of the gospel. So this wasn't something he had to prepare for when it was time.

This is something he had lived all throughout his life. You don't prepare for persecution when it's happening. You prepare for persecution when it's not happening.

[18 : 46] You develop habits, you develop things in your life. Like for example, look at the example of Daniel. Daniel prayed three times a day every day. So when the king signed the decree that you're not supposed to pray to anybody but him, what did Daniel do?

He went back and prayed three times a day as he had been doing. He didn't start when times got rough. He didn't start when times got rough.

He started way back when times were good. And he had developed this and it became part of who he was. And so that way when the persecution came, it didn't change him.

He just kept doing what he'd been doing. And so this is what Paul was doing. Paul was ready when times were good, when times were bad. He had already purposed. He had already lived in this state of I'm willing to give my life for the Lord.

I'm willing to die if necessary for the cause of the gospel. It just didn't happen when things started to get a little bit heated. This was how he lived his life. This was the attitude of his mind. This was the attitude of his heart.

[19 : 48] And so you just, you don't prepare for persecution when it happens. You prepare before by having this consistent walk of faith, this consistent walk of obedience. That's what prepares you for what's coming.

Not, okay, things are getting bad. What do I do? If you've been doing the right thing all along, you keep doing what you've been doing before you got there. And so that's where Paul is at here. He's in this state of readiness.

I'm ready not to be bound only but to die if necessary. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying the will of the Lord be done. And so they're basically giving it into the hands of the Lord.

And so, you know, we've, I can think they're probably thinking, well, Paul's kind of stubborn and hard-headed. He's not going to listen to us. So we're just going to leave him in the hands of the Lord. And so sometimes you have to do that with people, right?

If they won't listen to you, you got to say, well, the will of the Lord be done. I'm just going to leave you with him. And so that's what they're doing. And so they're leaving Paul in the hands of the Lord. And after those days, we took up our carriages and went to Jerusalem.

[20 : 53] There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea and brought with them one Manasson of Cyprus, an old disciple with whom we should lodge. Now there's a little bit of irony that happens here.

Paul, when he first started his missionary journeys, he's starting with Barnabas, who is a native of Cyprus. Now, come full circle, he's back in Jerusalem. His missionary journeys are over.

He's about to go to Jerusalem and be arrested. And who is he rooming with? Someone who is a native of Cyprus. So it's kind of ironic how that all kind of comes full circle. And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

So he's going to meet with James and the elders of Jerusalem. And he's going to be in the temple and we're going to see that's where he gets arrested and things start to pick up.

But here's kind of the last major transition in the book of Acts. We're getting to the final stages of Paul's ministry. He's going to spend a lot of time from now on.

[21 : 58] He's going to spend a lot of time in front of rulers and authorities and in prison. He's still got stuff to do, though. He's still got things to do for the Lord. Because as we've been tracking, we've been trying to look at, well, it's at this time he wrote this epistle, it's at this time he wrote this epistle.

And we've got up to where he has probably written Romans by now, but he's still got Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus, and Philemon he hasn't written yet.

All those are going to be written from prison. And so he's still got work to do. He's still got things that the Lord will use him for. And in fact, there's going to be a point, just kind of a sneak peek.

Once Paul is arrested, the Lord stands by him one night and says, be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

So the Lord's telling him, I've got more for you. There's things I still got for you to do. And so Paul will be able to say when he writes 2nd Timothy, which is probably the last thing he wrote, when he writes 2nd Timothy, he's able to say I have finished my course.

[23 : 11] And so the Lord still has things for Paul to do. And we'll see how that unfolds starting with his arrest in Jerusalem. We'll look at that the Lord willing next week. Let's pray.