

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

117. What command of Jesus had the men evidently obeyed? (cf. John 13:34-35)

### LESSON EIGHT

(21:1-40)

At Cos, 21:a

At Rhodes, 21:1b

At Patara, 21:1c-2

**21** *And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set sail.*

V. 1 - Cos was a famous place, Hippocrates and Apelles having been born there. There was also a great medical school there.

V. 2 - **Phoenicia** - This country, with its two main cities of Tyre and Sidon, had its major source of revenue from shipping, being a poor agricultural land.

In the Sight of Cyprus on the Left, 21:3a

At Tyre, 21:3b-6

*3 When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 5 And when our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were outside the city; and kneeling down on the beach we prayed and bade one another farewell. 6 Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.*

V. 3 - The ship was a larger one than they had previously used, a cargo ship, able to sail across the open seas. From the seven-day stay, it may have taken that long to unload its cargo and load it again in preparation for sailing.

V. 4 - The same general message was given Paul here as previously. As commented before, the Spirit had revealed to many that trouble awaited Paul in Jerusalem. On this basis, various ones were urging him not to go. No one, including Paul, had received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that he was not to go to Jerusalem.

V. 5 - We note “children” being mentioned by Luke, which he (as all other writers) rarely does.

V.6 - There is an idiom in Greek here, found also in John 1:11 and 19:27, “the things of them” (i.e., their homes).

In Ptolemais, 21:7

*7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the brethren and stayed with them for one day.*

V. 7- Ptolemais (Acre, Accho) commanded the road down the sea coast from Phoenicia to Egypt. The Israelites apparently never controlled it, though they did control the area south of it.

Notice that brethren are found everywhere, as seems evident also in chapter 11.

Caesarea, 21:8-14

*8 On the morrow we departed and came to Caesarea; and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 And he had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied, 10 While we were staying for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us he took Paul’s girdle and bound his own feet and hands and said, “ Thus says the Holy spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard*

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*this, we and the people there begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "The will of the Lord be done."*

V. 8 - Caesarea was the major Roman center in Palestine, with a good harbor. The journey from Ptolemais to Caesarea seems to have been by land.

**Philip** - It has been many years since our last notice of Philip in chapter 8. There Luke says he was "evangelizing" (8:40), and so became known as an evangelist (a bringer of good news). Consider that he is not designated a deacon which is a common mistake, in that the word is much broader in its usage than we traditionally use it. Stated differently, an evangelist (such as Timothy, II Tim. 4:5) could be described by the Greek word normally translated "deacon" (as could an apostle, Acts 20:24; Romans 11:13), as well as any who served others.

V. 9 - This verse brings up the point of women and their place in the church life. That God often used women in public worship and things of religion in general is obvious in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament (I Cor. 11). What seems to this writer quite as obvious is that they are to be under the authority of men, both in and out of the assembly (i.e., in public and at home). As I see it, no other restrictions than these are enjoined upon them. Hence, they may or may not be permitted to do something/anything, depending upon the decision of the men/husband/elders present and responsible. The text in I Cor. 11 clearly shows the "chain of command." In chapter 14, silence was enjoined upon them unless they had a revelation from God, vs. 26-32. In I Tim. 2:11,12, the place of men and women is again spelled out: she is to be subject to man, as was stated fully in I Cor. 11. Hence, the issue is of authority, submission and obedience.

V. 10 - Agabus may be the same person who appeared in chapter 11. In my judgment, a prophet in the Bible is not equal to a preacher even though both may do some of the same things. As is here shown, the prophet foretold something through direction of God. Such is the distinct facet of a prophet but not of a preacher. There is no good reason to appropriate the word and apply it to a preacher anyway. Preacher is a perfectly good word, and descriptive of a biblical function.

V. 11 - Agabus stated, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, what had been already revealed to Paul and to others who then told Paul. As did Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others, he symbolically portrayed the coming events.

V. 13 - As at Miletus (20:24), Paul considered his task was to take the offering unto Jerusalem. In my opinion, he thought it necessary to do so, but had no revelation on the subject. Hence, it was purely a human judgment on his part. As before mentioned, Luke does not state any reason for Paul going to Jerusalem. Paul does in Romans 15:22ff.

V. 14 - Since they could not persuade Paul (i.e., make him believe as they believed), they left it as it was.

Their expression may indicate several things, such as 1) May Paul's decision be God's; 2) May God use Paul's decision to His glory; 3) We can't change Paul's mind, so let's quit trying. This was quite a different matter than that of Jesus in Luke 9:51, in that Jesus was under God's direction to go to Jerusalem.

### **At Jerusalem, 21:15,16**

*15 After these days we made ready and went up to Jerusalem 16 and some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.*

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V. 15 - After some preparation, they left Caesara to travel the 64 miles to Jerusalem.

V.16- Mnason of Cyprus (note Joseph/Barnabas, and others) provided hospitality. He evidently was a first generation disciple.

### The Voyage to Rome At Jerusalem, 21:17-40

*17 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. 19 After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; they are all zealous for the law, 21 and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. 22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23 Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 24 take these men and purify yourself along with along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law. 25 But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity." 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself with them and went into the temple, to give notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for every one of them.*

*27 When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, who had seen him in the temple, stirred up all the crowd, and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching men everywhere against*

*the people and the law and this place; moreover he also brought Greeks into the temple, and he has defiled this holy place." 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. 30 Then all the city was aroused, and the people ran together; they seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple and at once the gates were shut. 31 And as they were trying to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. 32 He at once took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them; and when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the tribune came up and arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing, some another; and as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. 35 And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd; 36 for the mob of the people followed, crying, "Away with him!"*

*37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" 39 Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; I beg you, let me speak to the people." 40 And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying:*

V. 17 - The time of arrival was around the feast of Pentecost; late May or early June. As the group comes to Jerusalem, call to mind the long-standing hostility of the Jews toward Paul. Additionally, since it is around A.D. 58, the Jewish people were growing ever more restless under the Roman rule. They were being encouraged in such thought by various groups of zealots in their midst. Of course, at such a time as Pentecost, with thousands of Jews in the Jerusalem area, religious

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and patriotic feelings would naturally be higher, and tempers shorter on every hand. Into this sort of situation Paul arrived with a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles, who were Christians. A more explosive situation would be hard to find.

V. 18 - Apparently the elders were “overseeing” the disciples in Jerusalem, and were the leaders of the church there, as the New Testament teaches they should be. James was probably Jesus’ brother.

V. 19 - Paul, some years after chapter 15, again shows how God had used him to evangelize the Gentiles (cf Romans 15:16-20). Make note again that the Greek term for “deacon” is used by Paul to describe his activities (i.e., his ministry).

V. 20 - What the response was to the money Paul brought to Jerusalem we know not. He was justly concerned about how it would be received, Romans 15:25-32. The brethren did glorify God for what he had done through Paul, just as they did in Acts 11:18 in Peter’s case.

What seems to be of interest is the multitude of Christians, Jewish by birth and background, who yet kept the Mosaic law as a habit of life. This fact highlighted the issue of what the gospel message did to the Law. Doubtless, many were so clear on just what the relationship was (it is not much better today). My opinion is that any or most of the law could be kept, just as long as one did not view said practice as replacing Christ or in any way achieving one’s salvation. Evidently Paul felt something of the kind, viewing the incident in our text, with what he taught generally. It is, however, pertinent to consider that his understanding was not necessarily equal to his revelation. Hence, his practice may not always have been equal to what he preached on this occasion or elsewhere. (Ref. Acts 6:14 and Stephen).

**thousands** -The Greek word is “my hands”, equaling ten thousand in Acts 19:19, or a large number as in Luke 12:1; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11; etc.

V. 21 - Paul was not anti-Jewish in some senses of the term, as he himself asserted (and see Acts 24:14-15; 26:6-7). Jesus taught that Moses and the prophets pointed to Him, and were fulfilled in Him - so Paul taught. He was a Jew and practiced as a Jew (I Cor. 9:19; Acts 16:3; etc.), though not holding such practice to accomplish his salvation.

V. 22 - Since his arrival was known to all, the question was about what should be done (about clarifying Paul’s stand, or pacifying the fanatics among them, or how?). As v. 23 shows, they thought they had a way to resolve the issues before them.

V. 23 - The vow, perhaps a Nazirite vow of short duration, could be countenanced without a compromise of the law or the gospel, or so they thought. Note here Numbers 6:1-5., and Acts 18:18.

V. 24 - Paul is to take the vow with these men. The idea of purify/cleanse occurs in the LXX at Numbers 6:1.

**live in observance** - It is pertinent to point out that though the plan seemed good, unless it was clearly explained to all, anyone who did not know differently could have concluded that Paul was like all other Jews. There was nothing particularly Christian about keeping any of the law, per se. Anyone should know that unless one explains what one is doing, those watching may draw any conclusion. God sent Jesus as an example of his love, but he did not neglect to spell out the fact. Jesus died on a cross, but it was simply a death until God stated what the death meant.

V. 25 - The elders believed they understood what Paul held true and were in agreement therewith. This verse is a record of the attempt to keep the record straight as far as they are concerned.

V. 26 - Some suggest that the costs would be considerable for all five men, even if the charges

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were just those for a Nazirite (Num. 6:13ff). How Paul had this money is not known.

V. 27 - We suppose that Luke mentions the Asian Jews for two reasons: 1) they would know Paul's position well, and 2) also know Trophimus. In passing, we note that they had come to Jerusalem for the Pentecost feast. They "stirred up" the crowds, just as the people in Ephesus were stirred up (the same Greek word in both places).

V. 28 - The charges they pronounced against Paul were serious and were intended to bring such action upon him as would (evidently) take his life. They said that he had defiled (Greek term "made common") the holy place (i.e., the place not common to everyone).

V. 29 - Whether they really supposed that Paul had done as they charged, or simply used Trophimus as an excuse for what they did is anyone's guess.

V. 30 - Since the Jews had the right to protect the temple grounds, their actions were in accord with their rights, insofar as the temple was concerned. Paul was apparently dragged outside the court reserved for Jews into the court for the Gentiles. The terms for "seize" and "drag" were used in ch. 16 when Paul was in Philippi.

V. 31 - We recall that the Romans kept guard in the tower of Antonia at the N.W. corner of the grounds. Any such riot as this was would quickly attract the soldier's attention.

**cohort** - At full strength, 1,000 men

**tribune** - The commander, who would have centurions under him.

V. 32 - It is somewhat of a miracle that the soldiers arrived in such good time. We assume that God had further use for Paul. The crowd was beating Paul. The Greek term is often seen in English, transliterated as "type." It originally meant to leave a mark, imprint, etc. Paul doubtless

believed they were leaving their marks (note Gal. 6:17).

V. 33 - The Roman (chiliarch) tribune, Claudius Lysias, assumed Paul was guilty of something, and inquired of what. Remember that one could be an Egyptian and still be Jew.

V. 34 - As noted under v. 27, the identical terms were used in Acts 19:31,32. Because of the crowd's confusion, Paul was taken to the tower, or the barracks. It has been well remarked that a crowd (mob) can be equally dangerous whether they know a reason for their action or not.

V. 35 - The Jews may have stopped beating Paul, but they were still very upset!

V. 36 - They shouted, "Away with him" which is equal to "kill him". See Luke 23:18; Acts 8:33; 13:28.

V. 38 - As is evident, Paul was not who Lysias thought him to be: an Egyptian. Perhaps he had drawn this conclusion from something said by the crowd. "Assassin" comes from a word meaning "short sword".

There were many efforts such as mentioned in those days, which was one reason why the Romans sent an army to quell a Jewish rebellion, and end the matter by destroying the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

V. 39 - Paul politely reveals his true identity, and ends with a somewhat surprising request.

V. 40 - We should probably understand that Paul spoke Aramaic, a kindred language to Biblical Hebrew, and the common dialect among the Jews at that time. As he faced the crowd, perhaps the comments made in vs. 20-21 about the Jewish conceptions of him can be seen more clearly. Certainly some Jews thought him an apostate.

## QUESTIONS

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118. Did the travelers expect and receive hospitality from Christians along the way to Jerusalem?

119. Why does Luke describe Philip as an evangelist and not a deacon?

120. Did Philip's daughters have to prophecy to someone besides the Christians in assembly since they had to remain silent in said assembly?

121. Did Paul know to some extent what lay before him in Jerusalem?

122. About what time of year is it?

123. Does it seem as if the elders in Jerusalem were in agreement with Paul's work?

124. What did it mean to glorify God?

125. Could the people described in 21:20 have been like those in 15:5?

126. How would Paul taking a vow pacify the Jews?

127. Was Paul directed by God to do what he did, or was the action merely of man's wisdom?

128. In what way(s) was the charge in v. 28 true of Paul? False?

129. Is a mob equally dangerous whether the issue is clear or not?

130. Was Roman citizenship valuable?

## LESSON NINE

(22:1-23:35)

### The Voyage To Rome At Jerusalem. 22:1-30

**22** *“Brethren and fathers, hear the defense which I now make before you.”*  
*And when they heard that he addressed them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet. And he said: 3 “I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. 6 “As I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.’ 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the*