

Acts 21: PAUL'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM

Introduction

We concluded Acts 20 with Paul on his way to Jerusalem, winding down his third missionary journey. Acts 21 shows us the end of his third missionary journey. As Paul continued his journey to Jerusalem, some strange things happened. First, the disciples at Tyre urged Paul through the Spirit to avoid going on to Jerusalem. Paul did not listen to them but continued his journey. Also, at Caesarea, a prophet named Agabus, who came down from Judea, prophesied that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem would bind him and hand him over to the Gentiles. This prophecy led to the people pleading with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Again, Paul refused their plea and even said, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When they could not persuade him not to go, they gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

The rest of the chapter details the beginning of the trouble for Paul in Jerusalem. The trouble started as soon as he got to Jerusalem, just as the prophet prophesied. First, it appeared that the arrival of Paul brought uneasiness to the church leaders in Jerusalem. They were aware of the strong feelings against Paul among the Jewish leaders because they were told that Paul had been condemning their religion among the Jewish people in the diaspora and were looking for an opportunity to deal with him.

The church leaders gave Paul ideas of some Jewish rituals he could do to appease the Jews and show them that he wasn't against Judaism. The plan obviously did not work. As soon as Paul got to the temple, a mob of the whole city came, attacked him, seized him, and tried to kill him. Thankfully, the news reached the commander of the Roman troops, who sent his soldiers to arrest Paul and protect him from being killed by the mob.

Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Acts 21:1-40

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

Think Through the Following Questions

1. Can you explain what happened in Acts 21:4? How do you think the Holy Spirit spoke through the disciples in Tyre to Paul?
2. Why do you think Paul continued his trip to Jerusalem despite the disciples in Tyre urging him not to go?
3. What can we learn about prophecy from Agabus' prophetic message? Did Agabus at any time tell Paul not to go to Jerusalem? Why did the people make that conclusion?
4. What do you think of Paul's reaction to Agabus' prophecy? Do you think the prophecy was accurate, or it was Paul that was being stubborn? Do you think Paul should have listened and not go to Jerusalem?
5. What can we learn from this incidences about prophecy; it's meaning, interpretation and the role of personal conviction in interpreting prophecy.
6. What does the prophecy by Agabus teach us about accepting God's plan, even when it leads to hardships?
7. What do you think of the actions of the church leaders in Jerusalem? Do you think they supported Paul enough, or were they right to try to maintain peace with the Jewish leaders? Could they have protected Paul better?

Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?