

Chapter 21

THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Return Trip)

Acts 21:12-14

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 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.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

- i. Review chapter 20
1. Paul started on his third missionary journey in chapter 18:23, and that journey finally ends in chapter 21 which we are studying tonight.
2. He had begun in Antioch, the home church that he and Barnabas had helped to get started, traveled through Galatia and Phrygia to visit the churches he had

founded in his first missionary journey
[map: third: Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus],
then to Ephesus where he spent three years
building churches in that area of Asia.

3. Chapter 20 began with Paul leaving Ephesus, Paul and his companions traveled through Macedonia to strengthen the churches in cities in that region like Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea; and then to Achaia to minister to cities like Corinth and Athens, places where he had started churches on his second missionary journey.
4. We also mentioned from verse 4 how many people he had picked up in cities across the places he had ministered **[map: third: cities Paul recruited from]**
5. His plan was to sail from there through the Mediterranean Sea back home, but then learned of a plot on his life at the seaport, so he decided to return over land, back through Macedonia and Asia. **[map: third: return cities]**

6. In the city of Troas, he preached until midnight and a young man fell asleep in a window sill and fell 3 stories to his death. Paul ran down, picked him up and he was healed, and then went on to preach until dawn.
 7. After preaching all night, he decided to walk 19 miles to the next city, and then joined the others in a ship.
 8. He was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost, so he arranged a seashore meeting at Miletus with the elders of the church in Ephesus, where in an emotional exchange of words, the elders warned Paul not to return to Jerusalem for harm was waiting for him there.
- ii. The Journey from Miletus to Jerusalem (Verses 1-16)
1. *Acts 21:1 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 Patara:

2. Chapter 21 begins following that emotional departure. Paul and his party continued their journey southward, apparently on the same ship. **[map: Third_Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara]**
3. They docked overnight on the island of Cos, and again on the island of Rhodes, from whence they sailed to the port of Patara on the southwest coast of Asia Minor.
Acts 21:2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.
4. From Patara they took another ship which sailed on a straight course to the seaport of Tyre on the coast of Phoenicia. **[map: third_return to Jerusalem]**
5. In Tyre they found a group of Christian disciples and tarried with them seven days. And as they met in worship with these saints, the Spirit of the Lord again witnessed

that Paul was going to suffer persecution when he arrived in Jerusalem.

Acts 21:3-4

3 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 unlade her burden.

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

6. But Paul did not see it that way. When it was time for the missionaries to leave Tyre, families from the church accompanied them to the shore for a prayer meeting:

Acts 21:5-6

5 And when we 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.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7. They sailed from Tyre to Ptolemais, to Caesarea and to Jerusalem, but not without further warnings:

Acts 21:7-9

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 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.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

8. The passage mentions Philip was one of the seven. That is a reference back to Acts 6 when the Jerusalem church was still very young, perhaps even a year or two

following the original outpouring of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost.

9. Then the church was growing fast, they were sheltering some of the saints, providing clothing and food.
10. Seven men were appointed to help make sure the food distribution was an efficient and fair process. Two of those seven were Stephen and Philip, which went on to do much more than wait tables.
11. Stephen became a mighty preacher and also became the first saint to die for the gospel. He was stoned to death, aided by Paul, who was then Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee and persecutor of the church.
12. Philip left Jerusalem to preach the gospel in Samaria, which was possibly the first preaching they had since Jesus had preached there to the woman at the well and then to many others in the city.
13. Then Philip and his family made their way further up the coast to Caesarea and he and

his daughters continued to minister there.
And by the way, women can preach!

14. So, it was there in Philip's home that Paul and his companions were staying.
15. I just wonder about the conversation that Paul and Philip may have had.
16. One of the reasons that Philip had left Jerusalem in the first place, around 26 years earlier, was because of the persecution that Paul had begun against the church in Jerusalem. And Paul had even assisted in the murder of Philip's good friend, Stephen.
17. But now, Paul was persuaded in the Spirit that he must return to the city of Jerusalem, where, because of his early hatred for the message of Jesus he had started bloodshed against the church all those years ago.
18. But it was now because of his love for the message of Jesus that he was willing to return to Jerusalem to give his own blood if necessary.

19. Paul's friends, including Luke, and a prophet named Agabus, implored him not to go to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10-13

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 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 at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

*12 And when we heard these things, **both we** [including Luke], and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

13 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.

20. He asked the saints not to weep and to break his heart for he was willing to die for

the name of the Lord Jesus if it should be God's will. So, they left for Jerusalem, leaving it all to the will of God:

Acts 21:14-15

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

21. Some of the disciples of Caesarea accompanied Paul and his companions to Jerusalem, among whom was an old Christian from Cyprus, named Mnason who apparently had a home in Jerusalem, and planned to provide lodging for Paul and his friends.
- iii. Paul's Attempt to Appease the Hostile Jews (Verses 17-26)
 1. Paul and his company were given a glad welcome by the saints in Jerusalem.

Acts 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

2. Perhaps there was an uneasy peace that came over Paul's traveling companions who were expecting the worse. But this was only "the brethren", likely referring to the Jerusalem church, who received them gladly.
3. But things started on a different path the next day. Let's read how things developed as Paul was asked to help quiet some incorrect rumors that had spread among the believers concerning him:

Acts 21:18-25

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest,

brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they

observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

4. So following their victory report, there was a request to address the unfriendly attitude toward him of many Christian Jews who continued to hold rigidly to the Law of Moses, and of the open hostility of the non-Christian Jews.
5. It had been rumored among them that Paul taught the Jews they should not circumcise their children, but this rumor was untrue.
6. He did teach that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, but didn't teach that they did not need to be circumcised. If you remember, he asked Timothy to be circumcised, who had a Jewish mother and Greek father.
7. But James and the elders, in an attempt to avoid violence, advised him to participate in

- the Jewish purification ceremony with those four men who had been on a Nazarite vow.
8. If you remember, Paul had taken this vow while in Corinth, likely for the same reason, because he wanted to continue having the respect of the Jews he hoped to minister to.
 9. This was evidently what these four men were doing as well.
 10. But they also reaffirmed their conviction concerning the decree they had previously made on the question of circumcision in Acts 15:19-29.
 11. Paul then obeyed their advice and observed the purification ceremonies with the four men.
 12. It was going to the temple in Jerusalem for that ritual that brought about Paul's arrest, changing the course of the rest of Paul's life as recorded in the Book Acts.

Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the

accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

IV. PAUL'S ARREST IN JERUSALEM

A. Paul Seized by the Jews (Verses 27- 30)

1. The purification ceremonies for the termination of the Nazarite vow lasted seven days. But Just before the conclusion of the seven-day period in which Paul had taken part with the other four men, the hostility of the Jews against broke loose, having been ignited by a group of Jews from Asia.

Acts 21:27-30

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this

place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

2. As we saw wherever Paul traveled, he met Jews in all those places, and many of them came to Jerusalem for the main yearly feast days, and Pentecost was one of the more important ones.
3. Those who rose up against Paul in this passage were from Ephesus, where some Jews had resisted Paul's preaching when he was there. And of course, there was the major riot that brought many people shouting "Great is the goddess Diana" for

two hours, so Paul's ministry was well known.

4. Plus, they also recognized Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, who had been traveling with Paul, and they saw him with Paul in the streets of Jerusalem.
5. When they saw Paul in the Temple, they assumed that he had brought Trophimus into the Temple, which the Jews forbade for uncircumcised Gentiles on penalty of death.
6. That false rumor that a Gentile had passed beyond the partition into an unacceptable area quickly spread and set off a riot.
7. It is interesting that later Paul would write to the Ephesians, about the impact Jesus had on this wall of separation:

Eph 2:12-14

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

8. Even so, the anger of the Jews ignited hostility against Paul, and the whole city was moved with mob violence.
9. A great crowd gathered at the Temple and dragged Paul out of the Temple grounds into the court of the Gentiles, shutting the doors behind them, intending to kill him.
10. This is not unlike what happened to Paul in Lystra.
11. But what saved Paul that day was that the crowd drug him into full view of the Roman garrison, the captain of the guard dispatched soldiers to the scene, who rescued Paul from the blood-thirsty Jews.

Acts 21:30-31

30 And all the city was moved, and the

people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

12. The captain stopped the crowd from beating Paul to death, and then demanded of the crowd what Paul had done, supposing he was a very dangerous criminal based on the crowd response. Paul was bound with two chains.
13. No one in the crowd could accurately explain Paul's charges, so as they were taking Paul into the "castle" or headquarters.
14. On the way to reach the castle, the crowd got bad again.

Acts 21:35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

15. At the top of the stairway, just before entering the castle Paul surprised the captain by speaking to him om the Greek language. The captain had supposed he was a notorious Egyptian who had before caused much trouble as the leader of four thousand murderers. But Paul informed him that he was a Jew of Tarsus of Cilicia, of respected citizenship, and he asked permission to speak to the Jews. When the captain granted his request, he was again surprised when Paul began to speak to the Jews in the Hebrew language.

Acts 21:40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,