

## Acts 21

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Tape #8110  
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Luke writes, *Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos,* In the last chapter, Paul was with the elders of Ephesus. They had come out to the coast to Miletus to meet with Paul for this final meeting with them and so they accompanied Paul as far as the ship, it said in the previous chapter. And so when they let loose from Miletus, they sailed in a direct course to Cos.

*On the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara.* <sup>2</sup>*And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.* On their way to Jerusalem, Paul's determination to be there in time for the feast of Pentecost. <sup>3</sup>*When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo.* <sup>4</sup>*And finding disciples,* The Greek would indicate that they searched for and found the disciples. They came to Tyre. They said let's find out where the church is, where the body of Christ is meeting. So they found the disciples there and *we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.* Now there is a question here as to whether or not the Spirit of God is directly forbidding Paul to go to Jerusalem, which reading the text would seem to indicate. Or if the Spirit again warned Paul of the imprisonment and affliction that he would receive in Jerusalem. So they interpreted that as meaning that he should not go. And it is quite possible that the Spirit warned them or told them concerning Paul's imprisonment and they interpreted that message as meaning that he should not go to Jerusalem. I guess we won't know until we talk to Paul.

<sup>5</sup>*When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.* A beautiful scene! Paul found the believers there in Tyre. It was a Phoenician city. Jesus had visited Tyre in His ministry (Matthew 15:21-28). And you remember the story of that woman who came to Him, pleading for her daughter. And Jesus said it isn't right to take the children's bread and give it to the little puppies. And she said that's true, but the little puppies eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. And Jesus said, oh woman great is your faith! Be it done unto you even as you desire. And her daughter was delivered from the evil spirit in the same hour. Now it could be that that was the basic foundation for the church in Tyre. It could be that this woman witnessed of what Jesus had done for her. That she had laid the groundwork for future evangelism in Tyre and that actually the ministry there was established in a sense by Jesus as far as groundwork, foundation and later on when the gospel came there were those who in Tyre believed in Jesus Christ. Now I love this scene, the wives, the little children, sort of the whole church, coming with Paul to the edge of the city. Then kneeling on the beach, praying together, saying their good byes.

<sup>6</sup>*When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.* <sup>7</sup>*And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais,* (Now Ptolemais was the ancient name for the city of Acco. Of course there was that great fortress there that Napoleon tried to conquer and was unsuccessful. He *greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.* <sup>8</sup>*On the next day we who were Paul's companions* (We had the list of those. Trophimus and Luke and all of those who were traveling with him, in our last lesson.) *departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.* It's interesting that after Stephen was stoned, Paul took a lead role in the persecution in the church. He wrecked havoc to the church in Jerusalem. As a result of their persecution that Paul spearheaded, the disciples were spread throughout all Judea. And they went everywhere preaching the Word. The persecution was so heavy in Jerusalem, led by Paul. One of those who fled from Jerusalem was Philip. He went to Samaria, another interesting facet, because Paul

became the apostle to the Gentiles. Philip in a sense going to the Samaritans was breaking with the tradition of the Jews. Not as far as Paul, but here is Philip. He had had to flee Jerusalem because of Paul. Now twenty years later, he is hosting Paul in his home in Caesarea there! So we entered into the house of Philip, the evangelist, which was one of the seven. That is, one of the seven that was appointed to be a deacon in the church to oversee the church's welfare program, which means he wasn't Philip the apostle. There is an apostle by the name of Philip. We really don't know anything about him except that he was named as one of the apostles. But this is Philip, who was one of the seven who was appointed to wait the tables (Acts 6:1-5), by the apostles, whom God used to bring a revival to Samaria. And then one he preached to was the Ethiopian eunuch. So the national barriers began to be broken down actually by Philip. And Paul came and knocked the walls down. Philip sort of opened the gate and Paul knocked the walls down as far as bringing the gospel to the Gentiles.

<sup>9</sup>*Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.* In the promise of Joel (Joel 2:28-32), when God said He would pour our His Spirit on all flesh, He said your sons and daughters shall prophesy, so Philip's daughters had the gift of prophecy. <sup>10</sup>*And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.* We were introduced to Agabus earlier in the Book of Acts (Acts 11:28). He had predicted a famine that would come over the land. That famine did take place. So he was noted as a true prophet of God.

<sup>11</sup>*When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "* So he prophesied Paul's imprisonment. He will be bound. And he will be delivered to the Gentiles. Now in the case of Jesus this meant crucifixion. Because the Jews didn't have the power of capital punishment. Being turned over to the Gentiles with Jesus indicated crucifixion. They probably interpreted this as meaning crucifixion or death for Paul. He was later of course martyred in Rome.

<sup>12</sup>*Now when we heard these things, both we (Luke and Paul's friends that were journeying with him) and those from that place (Philip, his family, the body of Christ that was there in Caesarea.) pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.* It would be of course interesting to know if Cornelius was still there in Caesarea at that time. If there was much mixture between the Gentile believers and the Jewish believers.

<sup>13</sup>*Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."* Paul was not to be dissuaded because of the impending imprisonment. He was not afraid to be bound for Christ. He is ready to die for Christ!

<sup>14</sup>*So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased (That is they ceased begging him not to go. And they committed it unto the Lord), saying, "The will of the Lord be done."* They just said, well, the will of the Lord be done! How important that commitment is of ourselves! You know, we can fight. We can wrestle with issues. And when it's obvious that things aren't going to change then the wisest thing is just to commit. Well, the Lord's will be done. Otherwise you can strive with something and you can go on striving with it. It can be mentally tortuous to you. How much better just to turn it over and say, well, the Lord's will be done. To commit ourselves to the will of the Lord is the secret of the believers' rest! The peace that comes once we have totally committed it! And so Paul is determined to go. We can't persuade him not to go. So the will of the Lord be done?

<sup>15</sup>*And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem.* So they ceased their trying to dissuade him and they said well, the will of the Lord be done. They took up their luggage and headed toward Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup>*Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.* <sup>17</sup>*And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.* <sup>18</sup>*On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.* Now notice Peter isn't named or John or any of the others, only James. And it doesn't really say

that the apostles were there. The elders with James. It could be by this time, the apostles were out spreading the gospel throughout the world. We do know that Thomas went to India. They had gone on out. James was there, more or less still in charge of the church in Jerusalem, so Paul goes in to meet with him and the elders of the church.

<sup>19</sup>*When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.* <sup>20</sup>*And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord.* But then they started to lay this trip on Paul. *And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads (thousands) of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; They were informed of you. They've heard about you.* <sup>21</sup>*but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.* Now, we've got a problem! There are a lot of Jews now that believe here in the church. They are still following the customs of Moses. They hear that you are telling the Jews that are out there living there in the different parts of the world, they don't need to circumcise their children and they don't need to follow the customs. <sup>22</sup>*What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.* So when they hear that you are here, they are going to all come and it's going to create some problems, Paul. <sup>23</sup>*Therefore do what we tell you:* So we want you to do this which we say to you. *We have four men who have taken a vow.* <sup>24</sup>*Take them and be purified with them, (We want you to take and purify yourself with them. Go through the rites of purification with them.) and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.* Now they are actually asking Paul to more or less compromise his position. He knew that the Jewish rituals did not and could not make a person righteous. He was trusting in the righteousness of Christ through faith. He had once been into that whole ritual theme. He had gone through all of those rituals and he had been freed from the ritualism. But there were many Jews in the church who believed in Christ but were still following the old customs and rituals of the Jews. For fear that Paul might create a real division in the body of Christ there, they have asked Paul to go ahead and go through the purification rites. And to sponsor these four fellows who also were wanting to take this Nazirite vow. And during this time they really couldn't work so you take care of their expenses. And then when the people come and say oh, Paul is such a good Jewish boy. Look, he's shaved his head and he is going through the purification rites and he is sponsoring these other fellows. A good Jewish boy. And thus sort of keep peace.

Paul had an intense desire to reach the Jews. Writing to the Romans (Romans 9:3), Paul in speaking of his great burden for the Jews, said I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake, those according to the flesh. If I could just win them to the Lord. Such an intense desire to win his brethren to the Lord. He could even wish himself accursed if that could bring his brothers to the Lord. So Paul compromised with a compromise of love. Rather than arguing, rather than creating a scene, he consented to do it in order to, again according to his philosophy to the Romans (Romans 12:18), live peaceably with all men as much as you are able.

Now Paul in another place (1 Corinthians 9:19-21) said, I have become all things to all men that I might gain the more. To the Jew I became as a Jew. To those who are without the law, I became as one without the law, yet not the law of Christ. But I mean he didn't follow the Jewish rituals. He could blend in with the Gentiles and not follow the Kosher. I mean he could eat ham or whatever, you know, when he was with the Gentiles. But when he was with the Jews, less he offend them, you know, he would go Kosher with them. But the whole purpose and intent of Paul was to reach people for Jesus Christ. That was the driving force in his life, to reach people for Jesus Christ. And so in order to reach the Jew, he could become as a Jew. He would, you know, go ahead and follow the ritual in order to reach the Jew. I believe that Paul is hoping for the opportunity of somehow sharing the gospel with the Jews in Jerusalem. It was sort of a dream of Paul since his conversion, of being able to share the gospel in Jerusalem. So if this will further the cause of the gospel of Christ, sure I'll go through the purification rites. I'll sponsor these fellows.

And so they consented, they told Paul, <sup>25</sup>*But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.*" In other words, we recognize that the Gentiles don't have to do this. But, Paul you are a Jew and the Jews are going to expect you. You are not a Gentile. You are a Jew and thus we do expect you to abide by these rituals and customs of the law.

<sup>26</sup>*Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification,* (Once you have gone through the purification then you could actually enter into the temple. You weren't to enter in unless or until you had gone through these prescribed purification rites. So having gone through it then Paul entered into the temple to give an offering) *at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.* He sponsored them and brought in a sacrifice for them all. Interesting, again, Paul bringing an offering, that should be offered for every one of them. Now in the law there were many different types of offerings. There was the sin offering. There was the burnt sacrifice offering. There was the peace offering. There was no further offering for sin so Paul, I'm sure, did not bring a sin offering. But probably the peace offering, which was the offering of communion or the burnt sacrifice, which was the offering of consecration unto God.

<sup>27</sup>*Now when the seven days were almost ended* (As he was the seven days in the purification), *the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,* <sup>28</sup>*crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."* Now as you went into the temple, the outer court was the court of the Gentiles. Inside of that was the court of the women. And of course inside of that was the court of the men. Then you entered into the place of the sanctuary and ultimately the high priest into the Holy of Holies. But around the court of the women there was a wall. It had little signs hanging on the wall warning the Gentiles not to enter into this next area. They were forbidden to come into a proximity to the temple. They had to stay out in the court of the Gentiles. The little sign had a warning that if they dared to come beyond it they were responsible for their own death! The Jews would kill a Gentile that they found within the court of the women or the court of the men. If they would trespass beyond the court of the Gentiles they would be put to death. So the accusation is that Paul is speaking against the temple, against the law of Moses throughout all of Asia. And that he had brought a Gentile in to the temple, which of course was not true. But they accused him of that <sup>29</sup>*(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)* Wrong! He didn't. But all of the city was moved. <sup>30</sup>*And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.* <sup>31</sup>*Now as they were seeking to kill him,* (I mean they were then going to try to kill him. They were going to get outside and then let's kill him.) *news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.* Now one thing that Rome would not tolerate and that was rebellion. And they dealt very severely with it. Any officer of the Roman army who allowed a rebellion was also dealt with very severely. <sup>32</sup>*He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them.* So the captain came down with the centurions and the Roman soldiers because of this tumult.

Now we are told by Josephus that there were as many as two million Jews that would come to Jerusalem for the feast days. And this was the feast of Pentecost. So Jews were gathered from all over to Jerusalem. And the whole place was now in an uproar. People really don't know what is going on except there is just a lot of shouting, yelling and swinging of fists and they've got a guy down and they are trying to kill him. And so the Roman soldiers at the northwest corner of the temple mount area, which was the fortress of Antonio. It was built by Herod. And from that they had the porches and they could see over the whole temple area. The places where rebellion would be apt to be stirred was the temple. During the times of the feast there was a lot of feelings of nationalism. So the Romans would always bring in extra soldiers for the feast. And they would observe the people from the Antonio Fortress. And they saw then this

tumult. People running in, they were screaming and yelling. So the captain of the guard came down with the Roman soldiers and they went about to kill Paul. News came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. It's interesting that when they had the trial for Paul, they had this attorney that began to make his charges against Paul (Acts 24:2-9). To hear him tell the story it was far different. We found him, you know, and we were just sort of trying to deal with him, you know, and they came and violently, you know, and took him from us. We were only, just dealing with the situation. Amazing how lawyers can make things look, isn't it? We'll get to that when we see this silver tongued man.

*And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.* They weren't able to complete the job. <sup>33</sup>*Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.* So they arrested Paul. He was bound, each hand to a Roman soldier. They demanded what he had done. <sup>34</sup>*And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult,* (I mean all of these people are yelling stuff. He couldn't know for certainty the reason.) *he commanded him to be taken into the barracks.* <sup>35</sup>*When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.* <sup>36</sup>*For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"* (Kill him, away with him!)

<sup>37</sup>*Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?"* The captain was surprised. *He replied, "Can you speak Greek?"* (Because Paul spoke to him in Greek.) <sup>38</sup>*Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"* (Aren't you that fellow? Now about the year 54AD, there was a man who came from Egypt who gained a following of people. And this man passed himself off as having powers. And so he took a group of people over to the Mount of Olives. He had convinced them that from the Mount of Olives, he by his powers, could break down the walls of Jerusalem. The wall would crumble. And so here he was with these four thousand men waiting for the walls to crumble. Then, of course the soldiers came after them and the men were killed. But this guy got away. So the captain figured that he was the same Egyptian. He had come back again. Aren't you that Egyptian?)

<sup>39</sup>*But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."* This Paul is some guy. Here the crowd is just trying to kill him and now he is asking the captain for permission to speak to them. <sup>40</sup>*So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,* Here he is, the hour of glory. The moment he has been living for. Opportunity to share now with the zealots the gospel of Jesus Christ! He was willing to die for this privilege. It's interesting there must have been a real and we today say, charisma, about a charismatic person, and surely Paul was because he was filled with the Spirit. But here were all of the people as the soldiers were carrying him up, they're crying, kill him, kill him, away with him! And now as Paul stands up he waves with his hands. Silence. And suddenly they are all very silent and attentive, ready to listen to what Paul has to say. And so he begins to speak to them in Hebrew. This is it. His opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the Jews, in Jerusalem. A moment he has lived for!

Next week we will find the result!

Father, we thank You for Your Word. That the entrance of Your Word gives light. Let us Lord, walk in the light of Thy Scriptures and of Thy love. Lord, lead us in Your ways. Guide us, Father, into all truth. And Lord, we pray that You will help us to be very sensitive to Your will and very committed to Your will so that when things are happening that we don't understand, we can find that place of rest and peace as we say well, the will of the Lord be done. And Father it is our desire that Your will be done in our lives, in our church, in our community, in our nation. And Lord, we pray for that day that Your kingdom shall come in the world. We thank You that Your kingdom has come in our own hearts. That we are citizens of heaven. And Lord, we just look for You to come and transform this world as the kingdoms of this world

will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah. And He shall reign forever. Oh Jesus, come quickly, we pray. As we look at the conditions of our land and of the world, we realize how desperately the world needs a righteous, Godly, leader. Come quickly, Jesus. Establish Your kingdom. In Your name we pray. Amen.