

ACTS CHAPTER 21

PAUL AND COMPANY NOW HEAD TO JERUSALEM AFTER EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTY IN LEAVING. THESE VERSES QUICKLY RUN THROUGH A SERIES OF ONE-DAY STOPS:

VS 1 THEY STOP AT THE ISLAND OF COS (ABOUT 40 MILES AWAY). COS HAD A FAMOUS MEDICAL SCHOOL AND WAS THE HOME OF A JEWISH COMMUNITY., THE ISLAND OF RHODES (ABOUT NINETY MILES). RHODES WAS A TRADING PORT, A LOCALE FOR EDUCATION, AND A FREE CITY THAT HAD A JEWISH POPULATION. AND THEN PATARA (JUST OVER SIXTY MILES.) WAS THE SITE OF A FAMOUS ORACLE OF APOLLO.

VS 2-3 THEY THEN BOARD ANOTHER, LARGER SHIP SAILING TOWARD PHOENICIA ON THE OPEN SEA INSTEAD OF HUGGING THE COAST TRAVELING WITHIN SIGHT OF CYPRUS. THEY COME NEXT TO THE MAJOR COMMERCIAL CITY OF TYRE IN SYRIA. (A TRIP OF MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED MILES.). BOTH SYRIA AND PHOENICIA HAD A SIGNIFICANT JEWISH PRESENCE AND HAD POSSESSED A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE FOR ABOUT TWENTY YEARS BY THIS POINT. THE ARRIVAL IN TYRE ALLOWS THE SHIP TO UNLOAD SOME CARGO AND LOAD FRESH FREIGHT. TYRE WAS ON THE MEDITERRANEAN EAST COAST, A HUNDRED MILES NORTH OF JERUSALEM. IT WAS A CENTER FOR CRAFTS, PURPLE PRODUCTION AND TRADE. PHOENICIA IS THE COASTAL STRIP IN THIS AREA(LIKE OUR STATES) AND SYRIA IS THE LARGER REGION. PAUL VISITS DISCIPLES THERE FOR A WEEK. BOTH SYRIA AND PHOENICIA REGIONS HAD A SIGNIFICANT JEWISH PRESENCE AND HAD POSSESSED A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE FOR ABOUT TWENTY BY THIS POINT. NOTICE THE "WE" SECTION. WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

VS 4 WHO DOES PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS STAY WITH? THEY STAY SEVEN DAYS AND VISIT. THE DISCIPLES BECOME VERY CONCERNED FOR PAUL. WHAT DOES THE SPIRIT SHOW THEM. THE SPIRIT SEEMS TO HAVE REVEALED WHAT PAUL WOULD FACE AND THE WARNING COMES OUT OF THE RESULTANT WORRY ABOUT PAUL'S WELL-BEING.

VS 5 WHAT WAS PAUL'S DECISION? HE IS READY TO RISK HIS LIFE FOR THE GOSPEL AND IS DETERMINED TO MOVE ON. HOW DID THEY END THE SEVEN DAYS TOGETHER? DO YOU THINK IT WAS A COMFORT TO PAUL KNOWING THESE PEOPLE WERE PRAYING FOR HIM AS HE WENT FORWARD.

VS 6-7 WHERE DO THEY LAND NEXT? THIS SEAPORT WAS LOCATED ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE MILES SOUTH OF TYRE ON THE MEDITERRANEAN'S SOUTHERN COAST. HOW LONG DO THEY STAY?

VS 8 THE 40-MILE TRIP TO CAESAREA MAY HAVE BEEN BY LAND OR BY SEA (THE GREEK IS NOT CLEAR). DO YOU REMEMBER WHO PHILIP THE EVANGELIST IS? IN ACTS 6:1-8 HE IS ONE OF THOSE CHOSEN TO TAKE CARE OF THE WIDOWS IN JERUSALEM.

VS 9 WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT PHILIP'S FAMILY? THIS SPIRITUAL GIFT, EVIDENT IN THE EARLY CHURCH, WAS NOT LIMITED TO MEN. (1 COR.11:5). THEIR APPARENT

SILENCE IN VIEW OF ALL THE OTHER PROPHECIES REGARDING PAUL'S SUFFERING IN JERUSALEM IS SURPRISING.

VS 10-12 AGABUS, A PROPHET INTRODUCED IN 11:28 WHERE HE PREDICTED A WORLD WIDE FAMINE, CAME DOWN FROM JUDEA. THIS PROPHECY IS ACTED OUT AS HE TAKES PAUL'S BELT. THIS WAS A LONG BAND WRAPPED AROUND THE WAIST, IN WHICH MONEY COULD BE PLACED. WHAT DOES AGABUS DO WITH PAUL'S BELT. WHAT WAS HE ILLUSTRATING? NOTE- THE JEWS DID NOT PHYSICALLY BIND PAUL BUT WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ARREST. AGABUS DOES NOT TELL PAUL NOT TO GO TO JERUSALEM. HE ONLY DECLARES WHAT HE WILL FACE THERE. THE FACT THAT PAUL WOULD BE IMPRISONED WAS KNOWN BY SEVERAL INCLUDING PAUL HIMSELF (ACTS 20:23). HOW DO THE PEOPLE REACT?

VS 13 WHAT DOES PAUL TELL THEM THEY ARE DOING? THE VERB FOR BREAKING THE HEART IS VIVID, AS IT IS OFTEN USED OF BEATING CLOTHES TO CLEAN THEM, THEY ARE POUNDING ON PAUL'S EMOTIONS.

VS 14 THEY ACCEPT HIS RESPONSE, HOWEVER, AND CEASE THEIR PLEADING BY SAYING? _____. THERE IS NO INDICATION IN LUKE'S NARRATIVE THAT PAUL IS DISOBEDIENT HERE, AS THE SPIRIT HAS TOLD PAUL WHAT HE WILL BE FACING (20:22-23)

VS 15-16 THE DISTANCE FROM CAESAREA TO JERUSALEM IS ABOUT 65 MILES, A TWO-DAY JOURNEY BY HORSE. MNASON'S HOME MAY HAVE BEEN A HALFWAY POINT WHERE PAUL AND HIS PARTY MAY HAVE SPENT THE NIGHT.

VS 17 WHERE DO THEY ARRIVE? HOW ARE THEY GREETED? PAUL'S THIRD JOURNEY IN ACTS ENDS.

VS 18 PAUL MET WITH JAMES, THE HEAD OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH AND ALL THE CHURCH ELDERS. IT WAS PROBABLY AT THIS POINT THAT PAUL TURNED OVER THE OFFERING FOR THE SAINTS AT JERUSALEM.

VS 19 PAUL BEINGS TO GIVE A REPORT OF HIS TRIPS. WHO IS GIVEN THE CREDIT?

VS 20 THEY GLORIFY GOD BUT THERE ARE UNDERLINING PROBLEMS. WHAT IS THEIR CONCERN?

VS 21 WHAT IS PAUL ACCUSED OF DOING? THREE THINGS-1. _____
2. _____ 3. _____
THE WAY THIS CHARGE IS PRESENTED SUGGESTS THAT IT IS A RUMOR THAT NEEDS TO BE DEALT WITH WISELY.

VS 22 PAUL'S PRESENCE IN JERUSALEM MEANS THAAT SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE, SINCE THE JEWS WILL KNOW HE IS IN THE CITY.

VS 23-24 WHAT DO THE CHURCH LEADERS WANT PAUL TO DO? 1. _____
2. _____

3. _____. WHAT DO THEY SAY THE RESULT OF THESE ACTIONS WILL BE? THE HOPE IS THAT BY HIS ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW, THE REMARKS MADE THAT PAUL HAS TAUGHT AGAINST THE LAW WILL BE REFUTED. WE SEE FOUR MEN ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF OBSERVING THE NAZARITE VOW. THIS WAS A VOW WHICH WAS TAKEN IN GRATITUDE FOR SOME SPECIAL GOODNESS FROM THE HAND OF GOD OR SOME SPECIAL DELIVERANCE, FOR EXAMPLE IN SICKNESS. IT INVOLVED ABSTAINING FROM MEAT AND WINE FOR THIRTY DAYS, DURING WHICH THE HAIR HAD TO BE ALLOWED TO GROW. IT SEEMS THAT SOMETIMES AT LEAST THE LAST SEVEN DAYS HAD TO BE SPENT ENTIRELY IN THE TEMPLE COURTS. AT THE END OF IT CERTAIN OFFERINGS HAD TO BE BROUGHT--A YEAR OLD LAMB FOR A SIN-OFFERING, A RAM FOR A PEACE OFFERING, A BASKET OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, CAKES OF FINE FLOUR MINGLED WITH OIL, AND A MEAT OFFERING AND A DRINK OFFERING. FINALLY THE HAIR HAD TO BE CUT AND BURNED ON THE ALTAR WITH THE SACRIFICE. IT WAS A COSTLY BUSINESS. IT WAS QUITE BEYOND THE RESOURCES OF MANY WHO WOULD HAVE WISHED TO UNDERTAKE IT. IT WAS CONSIDERED AN ACT OF PIETY FOR SOME WEALTHIER PERSON TO DEFRAY THE EXPENSES OF SOMEONE WHO WAS TAKING A VOW. THAT WAS WHAT PAUL WAS ASKED TO DO FOR THESE FOUR MEN AND THAT WAS WHAT HE CONSENTED TO DO. BY DOING THIS HE WOULD DEMONSTRATE SO THAT ALL COULD SEE THAT HE WAS HIMSELF AN OBSERVER OF THE LAW.

VS 25 THE ELDERS ASSURED PAUL THAT THEIR PLAN (21:23-24) DID NOT CONFLICT WITH THE COUNCIL'S EARLIER DECISION. (THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL ACTS 15). WHY WERE SO MANY BELIEVING JEWS STILL CLINGING TO THE LAW OF MOSES? OLD CUSTOMS ARE DIFFICULT TO CHANGE. IN FACT, ONE DAY GOD WOULD HAVE TO SEND A SPECIAL LETTER TO THE JEWS, THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, TO EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS. IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE CITY AND THE TEMPLE WERE DESTROYED IN 70 AD THAT TRADITIONAL JEWISH WORSHIP CEASED. FOUR THINGS WERE MENTIONED IN THIS LETTER: 1. _____

2. _____. GEN 9:4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. AND IN LEV 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood,
3. _____ AND 4. _____

VS 26 THIS DID NOT CONFLICT WITH PAUL'S TEACHING THAT JEWS AND GENTILES CANNOT BE BROUGHT UNDER THE LAW TO BE SAVED. THIS WAS A MATTER OF JEWISH CUSTOM, NOT OF SALVATION.

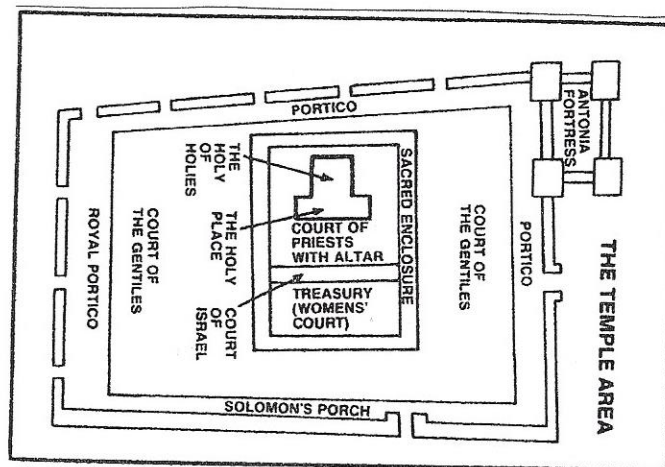
VS 27 PAUL'S ATTEMPT TO COMPLETE HIS VOW RUNS INTO EXTREME DANGER. CLEANSING TIED TO THE VOW WOULD BE REQUIRED ON DAYS THREE AND SEVEN (NUMBERS 19:12) IT IS DAY SEVEN THAT IS NOW IN VIEW.

VS 28 JEWS FROM ASIA RECOGNIZE PAUL AND STIRRED UP A CROWD BY MAKING TWO SETS OF CLAIMS: 1. THE FIRST CHARGE IS THAT PAUL TEACHES AGAINST THE PEOPLE, THE LAW, AND THE TEMPLE.

2. THE SECOND CHARGE IS THAT PAUL HAS BROUGHT GREEKS INTO THE TEMPLE AREA AND HAS DEFILED IT. THE IRONY IS THAT AS PAUL SEEKS TO SUPPORTS JEWISH ROOTS, HE IS ACCUSED OF NOT CARING ABOUT THEM.

VS 29 WHAT IS THE ASSUMPTION? LET'S SEE WHY THE JEWS WERE SO UPSET.

GENTILES WERE NOT ALLOWED INTO THE MAIN TEMPLE AREA. FOUR-AND-A-HALF-FOOT TALL STONE MARKERS INSCRIBED IN GREEK AND LATIN IN THE OUTER COURT THAT SURROUNDED THE COURT OF WOMEN ANNOUNCED TO FOREIGNERS THAT THEY WERE PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING THE SANCTUARY. TWO OF THESE NOTICES HAVE BEEN FOUND. THEY READ, "NO FOREIGNER MAY ENTER WITHIN THE BARRICADE WHICH SURROUNDS THE TEMPLE AND ENCLOSURE. ANYONE WHO IS CAUGHT TRESPASSING WILL BEAR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS ENSURING DEATH"



VS 30 THEY SEIZE PAUL, TAKE HIM OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE, AND, DRAGGING HIM OUTSIDE THE INNER COURT, SHUT THE GATES AND BEGAN TO BEAT HIM, POSSIBLY IN THE COURT OF THE GENTILES IF NOT FURTHER OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

VS 31 WHAT HAPPENS? THE ROMAN GARRISON IS STATIONED ADJACENT TO THE PREMISES. THIS LOCATION ALLOWS THEM TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE POTENTIALLY VOLATILE TEMPLE WITHOUT VIOLATING IT'S SANCTITY.

VS 32 THE TRIBUNE'S PRESENCE INDICATES THE SITUATION'S POTENTIAL SERIOUSNESS. THE BEATING OF PAUL STOPS.

VS 33 THE TRIBUNE ARRESTS PAUL AND BINDS HIM WITH TWO CHAINS. HE HAS NOT COME TO RESCUE PAUL BUT TO STOP A POTENTIAL RIOT. THE EFFECT OF HIS ACTION IS THAT PAUL'S LIFE IS SAVED FROM THE VERY ZEALOUS JEWS.

VS 34 THE EFFORT TO DETERMINE WHAT HAS OCCURRED ALSO MEETS WITH CONFUSION. PEOPLE IN THE CROWD ARE SHOUTING DIFFERENT THINGS. THIS LEAVES

THE TRIBUNE UNABLE TO OBTAIN CERTAINTY ABOUT THE FACTS, SO HE WITHDRAWS TO THE BARRACKS.

VS 35-36 PAUL HAS TO BE CARRIED TO THE BARRACKS BY THE SOLDIERS BECAUSE OF THE CROWD'S VIOLENCE. WHAT IS THE CROWD SHOUTING? THE MOOD IS LIKE THE CHOICE TO FREE BARABBAS AND EXECUTE JESUS. THE BULK OF JERUSALEM HAS REACTED NOW AGAINST JESUS, PETER, JOHN, STEPHEN AND PAUL. FOR ACTS, THIS IS A FINAL, KEY REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL. THE CITY IS LEFT BEHIND AS NO MORE MENTION OF IT TAKES PLACE.

VS 37 THIS PASSAGE INTRODUCES US TO A JOURNEY OF SUFFERING AND INJUSTICE THAT PAUL WILL EXPERIENCE AS AN INNOCENT MAN ARRESTED FOR HIS COMMITMENT TO THE GOSPEL. THE CAPTAIN WAS AMAZED TO HEAR THE ACCENTS OF CULTURED GREEK COMING FROM THIS MAN WHOM THE CROWD WERE OUT TO LYNCH.

VS 38 ABOUT 54 AD THERE HAD COME AN EGYPTIAN TO JERUSALEM. HE HAD LED A BAND OF DESPERATE MEN OUT TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES WITH A PROMISE THAT HE COULD MAKE THE WALLS OF THE CITY FALL DOWN BEFORE HIM. THE ROMANS HAD DEALT SWIFTLY AND EFFICIENTLY WITH HIS FOLLOWERS BUT HE HAD ESCAPED AND THE CAPTAIN THOUGHT THAT PAUL WAS THIS REVOLUTIONARY EGYPTIAN COME BACK. BUT PAUL STATED HIS CREDENTIALS AND THE CAPTAIN KNEW THAT WHATEVER ELSE PAUL WAS HE WAS NO REVOLUTIONARY THUG AND HE ALLOWED PAUL TO SPEAK.

VS 39 PAUL CORRECTS THE CAPTAIN, IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AS A JEW FROM TARSUS. PAUL'S HOMETOWN WAS KNOWN AS A CULTURAL CENTER. IT HAD SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND INHABITANTS. IT WAS A CENTER FOR TRADE AND POSSESSED A LIVELY LITERARY TRADITION. WITH EPHESUS AND SMYRNA, IT WAS ONE OF THE THREE GREAT CITIES ON THE SOUTHERN COAST OF ASIA MINOR. PAUL IS PORTRAYED AS A CULTURAL MAN. ONE THING PAUL WAS NOT IS A POLITICAL THREAT TO ROME.

THIS PASSAGE INTRODUCES US TO A JOURNEY OF SUFFERING AND INJUSTICE THAT PAUL WILL EXPERIENCE AS AN INNOCENT MAN ARRESTED FOR HIS COMMITMENT TO THE GOSPEL. IN THE CHAPTERS THAT FOLLOW, WE WILL SEE HIM TRUST GOD AND YET ARGUE HIS CASE, NEVER LOSING SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE PROPER REPRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL IS OF MORE IMPORTANCE THAN HIS OWN FREEDOM.....

