

ACTS CHAPTER 21

Paul Sails from Miletus (Acts 21:1-14)

When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.



Map 10. Shows the location of Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Cyprus, Syria, Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea and Jerusalem



Photo 37 Panorama of the archaeological site (“City Site”) in Tyre

When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”

When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.

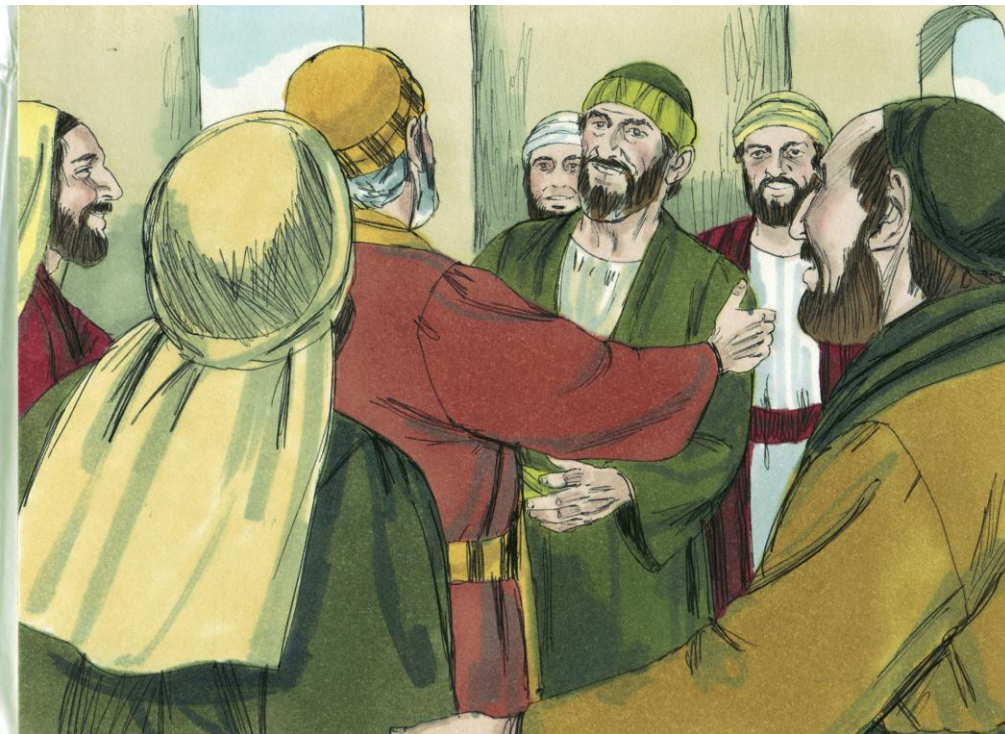
Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, “The will of the Lord be done!”

Was Paul out of the will of God in going to Jerusalem? While Paul was not directed to go to Jerusalem on this occasion (as he had been on another, Galatians 2:2) and was warned of bonds and afflictions if he went, he still did so out of a sense of faithfulness to his Lord, and God used it to give Israel one more impassioned plea from the lips of one who had been warned not to go them; who had been told that they would not listen; who stood before them in chains, relating the story of his conversion, if, perchance, it might lead to theirs.

Paul at Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-26)

After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.

After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

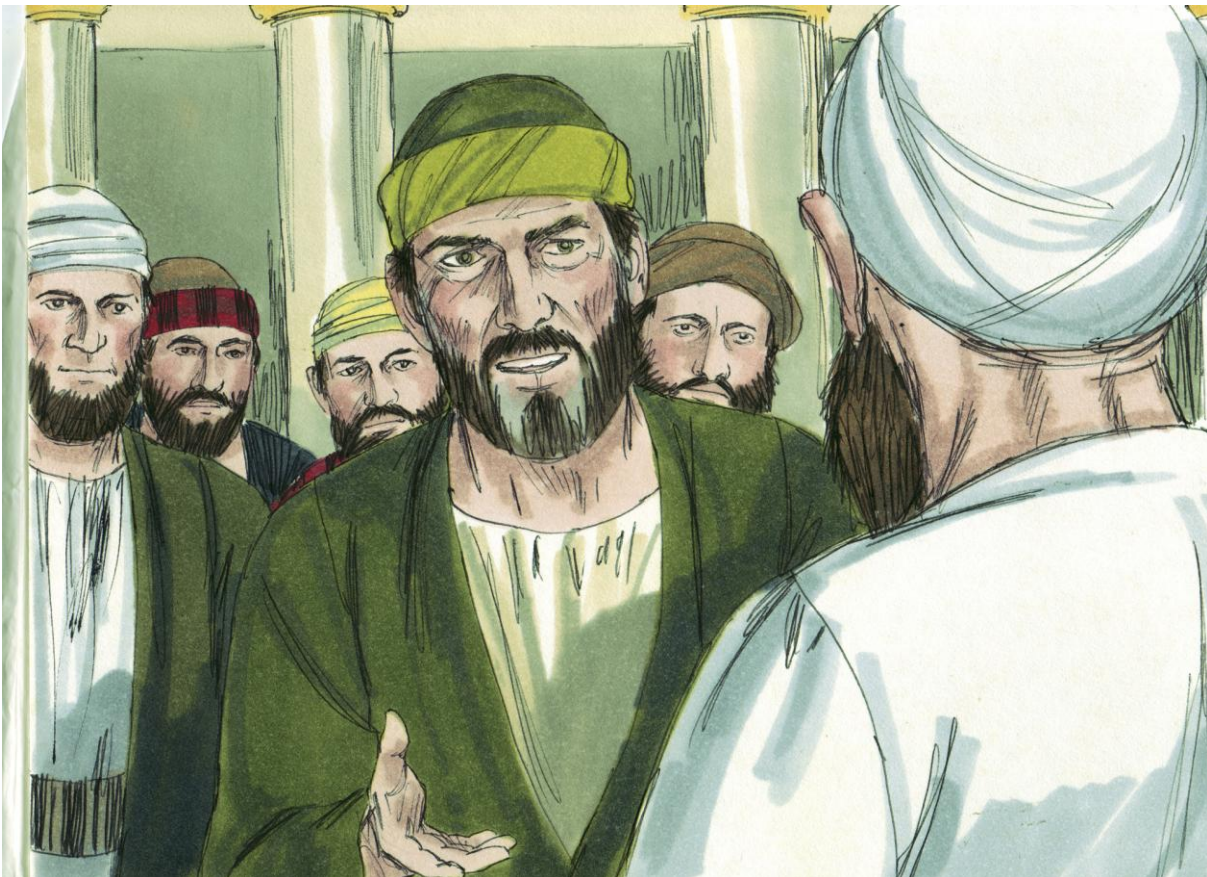




And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. "What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. "Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law. "But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."

Do James and the elders make their proposal to Paul to help him, or because they are embarrassed by his presence in Jerusalem at this time? If their desire is truly to help, they are in the position to do so now, but this does not appear to be the case, for, without offering to endorse his ministry or to stand by him in any way, they urge him to go through a Jewish ritual to appease those who have been informed (partly in truth) that he is leaving Judaism. Their proposition was this: Paul himself was evidently not under a vow at this time, but they had four men who were, and Paul could join publicly with them in their vow by purifying himself and paying for the sacrifices marking the consummation of their vow – a considerable amount, since two doves or pigeons, one he-lamb, one ewe lamb and a ram had to be offered for each of the four (Numbers 6).

Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.



Would it be right or wrong for Paul to yield? As we examine all the Scriptures involved we can come to but one conclusion: It would be wrong. It is strange to see Paul yielding to James and going back to what he had called “weak and beggarly elements” in his letter to the Galatians (Galatians 4:9). What all his own reasons were for doing so we do not know. Paul probably reasoned that the charge made against him was untrue, that he was here on Jewish ground and that joining in the vow might induce the Jews to give him a hearing.

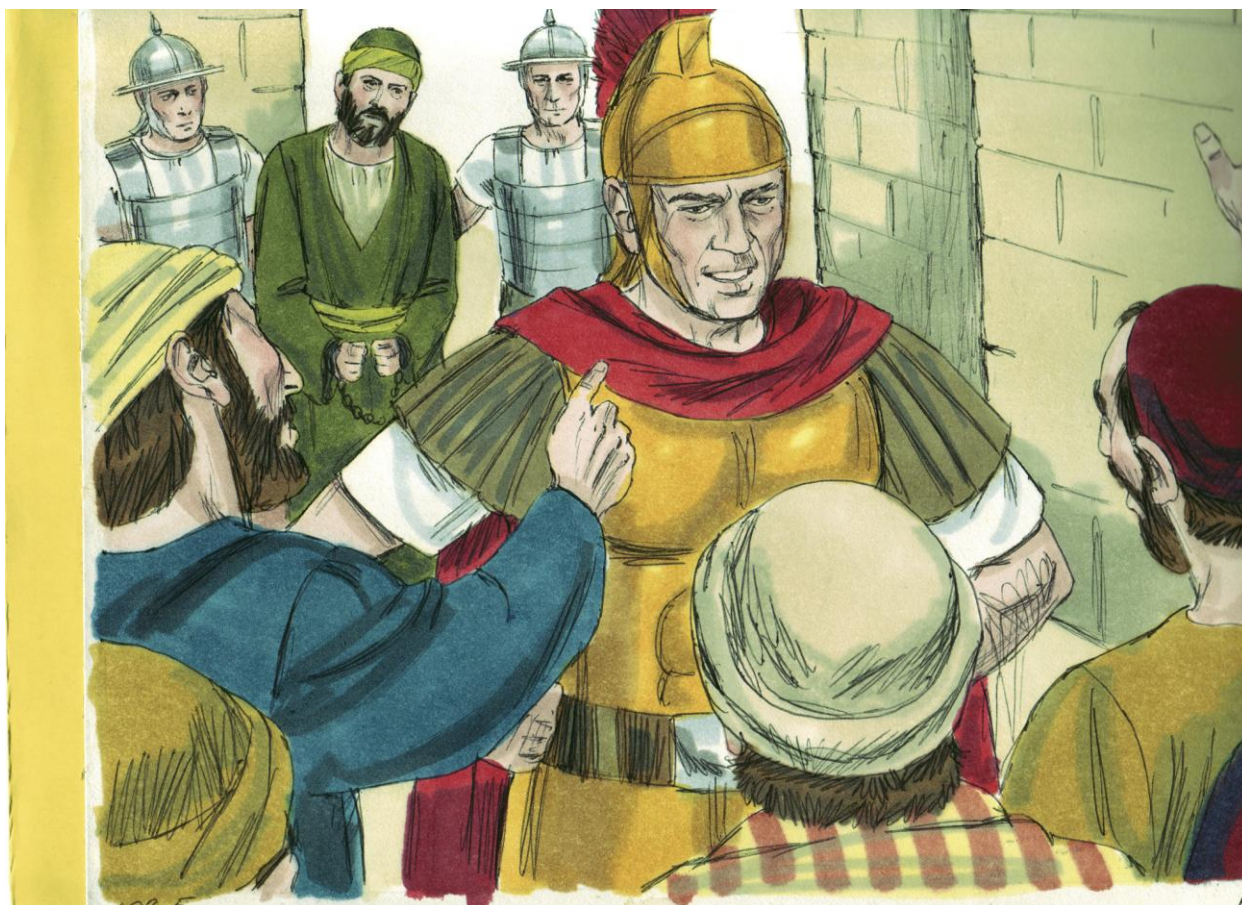
Paul Seized in the Temple (Acts 21:27-40)

When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, “Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”



For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done. But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.

When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, “Away with him!”



As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek? “Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” But Paul said, “I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.”



When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

QUESTIONS OF ACTS CHAPTER 21

ALL ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND IN THE TEXT OF CHAPTER 21

1. In what city did Paul and his travel companions find a ship crossing over to Phoenicia?

2. How long did they stay at Tyre in Syria, where the ship was to unload its cargo?

3. Where did Paul meet a prophet named Agabus who came down from Judea?

4. Since Paul would not be persuaded not to go up to Jerusalem, what did Paul's travel companions do?

5. Once in Jerusalem, what did Paul do after greeting James and all the elders?

6. What did James and the elders tell Paul that he should do?

7. Who began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him?

8. Who did they suppose that Paul had brought into the temple?

9. What did the commander of the Roman cohort do after taking hold of Paul?

10. In what language did Paul speak to the commander?

ACTS CHAPTER 21 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

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1When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; **2**and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. **3**When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. **4**After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. **5**When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we *were* out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. **6**Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.

7When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. **8**On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. **9**Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. **10**As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. **11**And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" **12**When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents *began* begging 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 bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." **14**And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

Paul at Jerusalem

15After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. **16**Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.

17After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. **18**And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. **19**After he had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. **20**And when they heard it they *began* glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; **21**and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. **22**"What, then, is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come. **23**"Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; **24**take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law. **25**"But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." **26**Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

Paul Seized in the Temple

27When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, *began* to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, **28**crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." **29**For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. **30**Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. **31**While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. **32**At once he took along *some* soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and

when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. **33** Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he *began* asking who he was and what he had done. **34** But among the crowd some were shouting one thing *and* some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. **35** When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; **36** for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!"

37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? **38** Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" **39** But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people." **40** When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

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