



Acts Book Study Chapters 21-23
Sunday August 11, 2024

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE (57 AD)

Third Missionary Journey of Paul (53-57 AD)



Third missionary journey of Paul (53-57 AD)

Adapted from BibleStudy.org

(Note our dates are different from what is given in the website image)

Miletus to Tyre (Acts 21:1-6)

The team along with Paul arrived at Tyre. Tyre, an ancient Phoenician city, is in modern-day Lebanon situated on the southern coast of Lebanon, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Beirut, the capital. They stayed 7 days at Tyre, with some of the disciples of Jesus whom they met there. These disciples told Paul through the Holy Spirit not to go to Jerusalem (21:4).

The Holy Spirit had already been speaking directly to Paul about what was going to happen in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23). The Holy Spirit moved on the believers Paul met at Tyre to once again tell him not to go to Jerusalem.

Tyre to Caesarea (Acts 21:7-14)

From Tyre to Ptolemais and on to Caesarea.



At Caesarea, they visited the home of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:7-16). This was Philip who was one of the seven who served in the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5) and who preached in Samaria (Acts 8:4-12) about AD 33-35. Now, about 20+ years later we read about Philip at Caesarea. Philip is referred to as "Philip the evangelist" (Acts 21:8), indicating his continued role in spreading the gospel. Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied, highlighting a family raised in the things of the Spirit and deeply involved in Christian ministry. Church tradition suggests that he continued to live and minister in Caesarea. He is believed to have played a significant role in the early church there. Not much is known of Philip's latter years. Some church traditions claim that he became the bishop of Tralles in Asia Minor (modern day city of Aydin in Turkey).

The daughters of Philip prophesied. To prophesy is to speak an inspired word given by the Holy Spirit to minister to other people. Women can prophesy, speak, teach, preach and minister to people.

Agabus came from Judea to warn Paul about what would happen if he went to Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11). Luke and the brothers tried to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem but yielded to his decision (Acts 21:12-14).

Did Paul Make A Mistake In Going Up To Jerusalem?

We note here that the apostle Paul had three “warnings” from the Holy Spirit about what would happen in Jerusalem. One word (Acts 21:4) was a clear instruction **not** to go to Jerusalem:

A, Acts 20:22-24 The Holy Spirit spoke directly to Paul in his spirit warning him of what awaited him in Jerusalem.

B, Acts 21:4 The disciples at Tyre inspired by the Holy Spirit told Paul **not to go to Jerusalem**

C, Acts 21:10-11 Agabus the prophet from Jerusalem, prophesied by the Spirit to Paul of what would happen in Jerusalem, if he went there. Based on this prophetic word the brothers attempted to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

And yet Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem. Paul’s main reason for wanting to go to Jerusalem was to deliver the offering from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia to the believers who are at Jerusalem (Acts 19:21; Romans 15:26-28). He also wanted to be in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, if possible (Acts 20:16). After delivering the offering, from Jerusalem he planned to travel to Rome and go on to Spain (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:15; Romans 15:23-24).



While the Holy Spirit warns us, what we do with the warnings, and how we act on them, is up to us.

What if Paul, after having received these warnings from the Holy Spirit, sent the offering (collections) to Jerusalem through others, and journeyed from Miletus or Tyre or Caesarea to Rome? Would Paul have been able to evangelize and plant churches in many more parts of Europe, west of Rome and other regions? Would he have been more useful in his service for the Kingdom of God?

While we may not know the “correct” answer to this question, this side of heaven, we can take it that as co-workers with God, we are responsible for the decisions we make. God will speak to us in many ways, but ultimately, we must make our decisions, and God will not force us into doing something. God will continue to journey with us (not into sin of course), with the decisions we make, because He remains faithful to us.

The Advice of the Elders At Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-25)

From Caesarea they went to Jerusalem in the Spring of A.D. 58, where they were received gladly by James (the half-brother of Jesus, the writer of the book of James) and the elders (Acts 21:15-17).

In Acts 21:17-26, Paul returned to Jerusalem, and the leaders of the Jerusalem church informed him that many Jewish believers were concerned that Paul was teaching Jews living among Gentiles to forsake the law of Moses, including not circumcising their children or following Jewish customs. To demonstrate that Paul still respected the Jewish Law and was not teaching Jews to abandon it, the elders suggested that Paul join four men who had taken a Nazarite vow and pay for their expenses to complete the vow, which would include offerings and the shaving of their heads (Acts 21:23-24). Paul agreed to the suggestion, purified himself along with the men, and went to the temple to give notice of the completion of the days of purification and the offering that was to be made for each of them (Acts 21:26). This act was meant to demonstrate Paul's respect for Jewish customs and to show that he did not oppose the Law of Moses, particularly to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

The Nazarite Vow

There were four Jewish believers who had taken a vow of consecration perhaps like Paul's Nazarite vow mentioned in Acts 18:18. The Nazarite vow, which the Apostle Paul took in Acts 18:18 and sponsored these four men in Acts 21:26, is a special vow of dedication to God found in the Old Testament, specifically in Numbers 6:1-21. The Nazarite vow was a voluntary commitment made by an individual, either male or female, to dedicate themselves to God for a specified period. The word "Nazarite"



comes from the Hebrew word "nazir," meaning "consecrated" or "separated." The purpose was to set oneself apart for special service or dedication to God. The Nazarite vow would include: (A) Abstinence from wine and strong drink. The person taking the vow had to abstain from wine, vinegar, grape juice, grapes, and raisins (Numbers 6:3-4). This symbolized a life of purity and separation from worldly pleasures. (B) Not cutting their hair. During the period of the vow, the Nazarite could not cut their hair. The long hair was a visible sign of their consecration (Numbers 6:5). (C) Avoiding contact with dead bodies. The Nazarite was not allowed to go near a dead body, even if it was a close family member, as this would make them ritually unclean (Numbers 6:6-7). When the period of the vow was completed, the person would go to the Temple and offer sacrifices, including a burnt offering, a sin offering, and a peace offering. They would also shave their head at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (Temple) and place the hair on the fire under the peace offering (Numbers 6:13-18).

To The Jews I Became As A Jew

The motive behind Paul's sponsoring these four Christian Jews in completing their Nazarite vow could be understood from 1 Corinthians 9:20: *"And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law."* Also, we see Paul's heart for Jews who had not been saved as expressed in Romans 9:1-3 and Romans 10:1-2. Although Paul taught very clearly that Jewish believers did not need to keep the Law (see Galatians), and that we are saved not because of the Law, but by grace through faith (see Romans), **Paul's participation in the Nazarite vow and his sponsorship of these four believers was an expression of cultural sensitivity and peacemaking.** Paul was in some way building a bridge with Jewish believers who were still zealous for the Law, thereby avoiding unnecessary conflict and misunderstanding. His intention was to strengthen the Jewish believers and to win the Jews who were not believers yet in Jesus Christ.

Theological Correctness And Cultural Sensitivity

Both James and Paul had expressed their position concerning the Law very clearly in their written epistles: James, Galatians, and Romans. Yet, in practice, they recognized that many Jewish believers were still honoring the Law, the customs and traditions. They recognized the cultural importance of these matters to Jewish Christians. The Law was holy, just, good and spiritual (Romans 7:12,14). In fact, we observe Paul having Timothy circumcised, and himself practicing the Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18) for its spiritual benefit. Yet, the truth remained that Christ has redeemed us from the Law (Galatians 3:13). They were willing to make the journey of transition, into coming to a place where they could be free from the "yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1-2).



Paul Arrested in Jerusalem AD 57 (Acts 21:26-40)

As he had been warned, Paul's visit to Jerusalem turned out to be a very difficult time. When Paul visited the temple with four Jewish believers (Acts 21:18-26), a riot broke out and an angry mob seized Paul, dragged him outside the temple, and beat him up. The Jewish mob accused Paul of defiling the Temple by bringing a Gentile (Trophimus the Ephesian) into the Temple (which Paul had not done). Roman soldiers intervened and arrested him.

Trophimus was a young man being trained by Paul and travelling with Paul (Acts 20:4; Acts 21:29; 2 Timothy 4:20).

Acts 21:31, Claudius Lysias held the position of a Roman tribune, an officer rank in the Roman army, specifically the commander of the Roman cohort stationed in Jerusalem. This cohort of about 1000 men was part of the Roman military forces responsible for maintaining order and security in the city. Lysias would have had significant authority and responsibility, including soldiers and enforcing Roman law.

Paul could have been killed by the mob had not Claudius Lysias acted quickly. He got Paul out of the hands of the mob. He requested permission to speak to the Jewish crowd. We pick this up in the next chapter.

Was the Advice of the Elders a Mistake? Did Paul Make A Mistake in Following the Advice of the Elders?

As we examine these events, there are several questions we can raise, for the purpose of learning, and understanding how we ought to walk with God, in our journey of faith, today.

First, we recognize that the intention behind what the elders advised and what Paul agreed to do was good. No question about that. **But was it necessary?**

A second question we may also ask is: **was it the right thing to do**, after all that James and Paul had already been teaching and writing? Was this "show" to appease Jewish believers, consistent with what they had written in the epistles: James, Galatians, Romans, (and 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Corinthians)? Why could they have not just acted consistent with what they had already written?

A third question. Since Paul had already been warned, what if he chose to **be wise about his visit to Jerusalem and stayed hidden during his time there**? What if Paul had quietly



delivered the collection (offering) to the church in Jerusalem and then remained quiet and hidden while in Jerusalem, and quietly continued his journey to Rome?

Once again, we do not know all the “correct” answers. We only wish to examine these events objectively and see if there are things we can learn ourselves.

While persecutions will come, and the Holy Spirit is there to empower us to be His witnesses, the Lord Jesus instructed us to be wise as serpents, while being harmless as doves.

Matthew 10:16-20

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.

18 You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

19 But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;

20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

In serving God and in people, while listening to the directives of the Holy Spirit, we need to walk with wisdom.

Good intentions may not always lead to good decisions. Good intentions must be combined with divine wisdom.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO (57 AD)

Paul Addresses The Jewish Crowd in Hebrew (Acts 22:1-21)

The apostle Paul presented his defense (Greek ‘*apologia*’) to the Jewish crowd, in the Hebrew language. Paul had the opportunity to share with the Jewish mob, his life and the encounter he had with Jesus. He mentioned his strong Jewish background. He recounted his powerful encounter with the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul described his calling and his commissioning to go to the Gentiles.

Paul “I am a Roman Citizen” (Acts 22:22-30)

The Jewish crowd listened patiently to Paul’s testimony. Everything seemed fine until Paul mentioned one word. This one word angered the crowd: ‘Gentiles’. To think that



Paul would be a bearer of the message of salvation to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles, were being offered this message, the same way the Jews were, was unacceptable.

The Roman commander Claudius Lysias was preparing to have Paul beaten to get the real reason the crowd was so against Paul. Paul invoked his Roman citizenship, since he had been born in Tarsus, a Roman colony. The Roman commander stopped any further action against Paul, kept him safe in the barracks, and brought him before the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin the next day.

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE (57 AD)

Paul's Defense Before The Jewish Council, The Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10)

I Have Lived In All Good Conscience Before God (Acts 23:1)

Paul begins by stating that he lived with a good conscience before God. Something for us to take note of and live by.

We need to maintain a good, clear conscience, "*a conscience without offense toward God and men*" (Acts 24:16). If we do not maintain a good conscience, we could end up destroying (making shipwreck) of our own faith (1 Timothy 1:19). When we have a clear conscience, we have confidence toward God (1 John 3:21).

Paul Confronts Ananias, the High Priest (Acts 23:2-5)

Ananias the high priest had Paul struck him for speaking so boldly and claiming innocence. Paul responded "*God will strike you.....*". Paul was struck without first being proven guilty which was contrary to the Law (Deuteronomy 25:1-2). Paul's words of judgement were prophetic. According to Josephus the Jewish historian, Ananias was killed five years later by his own people in a riot that broken out.

Paul Sets The Council In Disarray (Acts 23:6-10)

Paul recognized the two divisions among the Snahedrin. The Pharisees who believed in the resurrection and the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection. Paul used this to emphasize that he was being called into question for preaching the resurrection of Jesus. This set the entire council in disarray.

The Roman commander Claudius Lysias took Paul away to safety.

You Must Bear Witness at Rome (Acts 23:11)

The Lord Jesus appeared to Paul and assures him that he would go to Rome, to bear witness for Him there.



We recall that Paul previously had planned to go to Rome. This desire to minister and bear witness at Rome, was from the Lord. Only, we do not know, if it had to have happened in this manner, with Paul being arrested and sent there as a prisoner. But we know Romans 8:28, that all things do work together for the good of those who love Him and called to His purposes.

Plot To Kill Paul Foiled (Acts 23:12-22)

Paul was held in the barracks in Jerusalem, under Roman custody, after being arrested in the Temple. While he was detained, more than 40 Jewish men formed a conspiracy, taking an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. They planned to ambush Paul when he was brought before the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin). Paul's nephew learned about the ambush plot. He immediately went to the barracks to inform Paul. Paul, in turn, called one of the Roman centurions and asked him to take his nephew to the commander, Claudius Lysias, so that he could share the information directly with him. Claudius Lysias was put on alert and was determined to protect Paul.

What Paul's nephew did was so important to keep Paul safe.

Paul Sent to Felix the Governor in Caesarea (Acts 23:23-35)

At nine o'clock that night, the Roman commander Claudius Lysias, arranged for an escort of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and another two hundred spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea and bring him to Felix.

This was approximately 65-70 miles (around 105-115 kilometers) which would have taken two days, with a stop at Antipatris.

Paul was held there at Herod's Praetorium. Herod's Praetorium or palace was originally built by Herod the Great (reigned 37-4 B.C.) and served as Herod's official residence in Caesarea. It was a lavish and fortified structure built along the coastline, complete with courtyards, gardens, reception halls, and living quarters. After Herod's death, Caesarea became the seat of the Roman governors (procurators) of Judea, and the palace served as the official residence and administrative headquarters for these governors. Paul was held in Herod's Praetorium while awaiting trial before Governor Felix (Acts 23:35).

Practical Insights

#1, Taking responsibility for your decisions

The Lord will guide us, warn us, instruct us in our spirits, and through others.
The final decision is ours and we must take responsibility for our decisions.



Acts – Book Study – Chapters 21-23
Sermon Notes, Sermon Outline and Small Group Study Guide

The Lord will work with us and journey with us, in and through the decisions we make.

#2, In addition to good intentions, use godly wisdom when making decisions.

In addition to good intentions, we must ask is it necessary, is it right, is it wise.

#3, Exercise your civil rights. Paul did.

#4, Live with a good conscience before God.

SUMMARY

GOSPEL AND SALVATION CALL

SUPERNATURAL MINISTRY TIME

Minister as the Spirit leads



Acts – Book Study – Chapters 21-23
Sermon Notes, Sermon Outline and Small Group Study Guide



Acts Book Study Chapters 21-23
Sunday August 11, 2024

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full-length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at our [sermons page](#). Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship, and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture references: *Please request Life group members to read Acts 21-23, before the Life Group Meeting. This can help save time.*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

1, While there are many unknowns and we will not know the "correct" answer, discuss what you would have done, if you were in Paul's place, having received 3 clear warnings from the Holy Spirit, not to go to Jerusalem. What would you have done and why?



2, James and the elders in Jerusalem advised Paul to participate in sponsoring 4 Jewish Christian men in completing their Nazarite vow. The intention was to show that Paul still honored the Law and Jewish customs. Could things have been handled differently given the circumstances? Could Paul have avoided being arrested, and instead continued his journey to Rome peacefully?

3, How does one practically live with a good conscience before God, day to day? Why is keeping a good conscience important in the life of a believer?

If time permits, each one can take a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.

FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

1, families to be protected and strengthened

2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.

3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for all details to go well as we plan and build our Bible college and church facilities to serve the Lord and people.

Close by thanking God together.



Acts – Book Study – Chapters 21-23 Sermon Notes, Sermon Outline and Small Group Study Guide



USEFUL RESOURCES

Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

YOUTUBE: <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

WEBSITE: <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

CHURCH: <https://apcwo.org>

FREE SERMONS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

FREE BOOKS: <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

DAILY DEVOTIONALS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

JESUS CHRIST: <https://examiningjesus.com>

BIBLE COLLEGE: <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

E-LEARNING: <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

WEEKEND SCHOOLS: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

COUNSELING: <https://chrysalislife.org>

MUSIC: <https://apcmusic.org>

MINISTERS FELLOWSHIP: <https://pamfi.org>

CHURCH APP: <https://apcwo.org/app>

CHURCHES: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/churches>

WORLD MISSIONS: <https://apcworldmissions.org>

SERMON OUTLINE

The book of Acts records the first 40 years of the Early Church. This is a book study of the Acts of the apostles, or more correctly, the acts of the Holy Spirit through the early believers. As we study the book of Acts there are two compelling perspectives that we develop: (A) the Church's DNA – what a Spirit filled church would look like and (B) how the Church would go about fulfilling the Great Commission empowered by the Holy Spirit. We glean spiritual and practical insights from each chapter and share ways we can apply these in our lives. In this sermon we cover Acts chapters 21-23. Paul made a firm decision to go to Jerusalem even though the Holy Spirit warned him on three occasions about what was going to happen if he went to Jerusalem. At Jerusalem James and the Elders advise Paul to participate in a Jewish custom to win over Jewish believers. This lands Paul in big trouble and he is arrested. He makes his defense before the Jewish mob and later before the Jewish council. He is sent under high security from Jerusalem to Caesarea to Governor Felix. We objectively assess these decisions and events and try to draw insights for our own journey of faith.

KEYWORDS



Acts – Book Study – Chapters 21-23 Sermon Notes, Sermon Outline and Small Group Study Guide

Acts of the apostles, book study of Acts, Gospel preaching, Spirit filled church community, sermons, sermon notes, sermon outline, free sermon notes, free sermon outlines, Bible study resources

REFERENCES/CITATIONS

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