

Acts (Part Twenty-Two)

Acts 21 Parallels Between Paul's and Christ's Last Journey to Jerusalem

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We are going to begin by going into something that again touches fairly frequently on the book of Acts. It is sort of a continuation of the subject that I gave at the beginning of last week's Bible study, where I was talking to you about the number of references to the first day of the week and whether or not there was any kind of authority in the Bible for keeping that day. And now we are going to look at the Sabbath in the book of Acts but we are going to go back to Mark 2, and begin there in verse 27 and set a stage before we get into Acts and the scriptures that are there.

Mark 2:27-28 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

The key thing here for this particular sermonette, I guess you would call it, is that the Sabbath was made for man. Now the reason that this has to be established is because of the world, that they believe that the Sabbath is Jewish. If you ask them directly whether it was Jewish, it is very likely that a large number of them would say, yes it is. There would be some that would be hesitant about saying it, and they would say, "Well, it appears in the Ten Commandments and therefore technically it's not Jewish, but on the other hand, the Jews have been the only ones that they know of that's keeping it." So the general approach to it is that the Sabbath is a Jewish day, but that is not what the Bible says. The Bible says that the Sabbath was made for man, meaning mankind, not just a particular family group of people. So it is not just for Israelites, it is for others.

Now we are going to go to the book of Ephesians in the second chapter. The major subject that runs through the book of Ephesians is unity. The Ephesian church, of course, was one that was primarily Gentile, and the book was

written in order to show them that they were a part of the whole church. That it was not a Gentile and Christian church, it was Christ's Body, and that we are all one in Christ.

Ephesians 2:11-12 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision [the Circumcision being the Israelites or in this case the Jews, called the Gentiles Uncircumcision]—that at that time you were without Christ [that is, before conversion], being aliens [strangers, foreigners] from the commonwealth of Israel [state or nation of Israel] and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope [because they were not part of that covenant, they could not receive the benefits of it] and [they were] without God in the world.

That is a veiled reference to the fact that the God of Israel is the only God that is living. Other nations, other religions have gods, but their gods are not living. And so if they were not in contact with the true God, they would have no hope because there was no way that they could make a covenant with that God. So a non-Israelite was in a bad way spiritually.

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off Gentiles have been made near by the blood of Christ.

Then comes a section that goes down to verse 19.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore [as a result of these things that were given between verses 14 and 18, which we do not want to go into at this time], you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Here Paul wrote that when these Ephesians became converted, they became spiritually an Israelite. They are no longer strangers and foreigners, but they are fellow citizens. So they are spiritually an Israelite, and that makes them, then, spiritually descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Let us go back to the Old Testament to Exodus the 12th chapter. Now in Exodus 12, after the killing of the Passover lamb, and in verse 38, they are on their way out, the exodus is occurring, and it says a mixed multitude went with them also, and flocks and herds, a great deal of livestock. Now this mixed multitude were non-Israelites. They were Gentiles and they went out of Egypt. They made the exodus out of Egypt.

Exodus 12:48-49 [the Passover regulations] And when a stranger sojourns with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised [in the New Testament that would be equivalent of conversion, let them be converted], and let them come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who sojourns among you."

What I wanted you to see there was that Gentiles were never excluded from the Old Covenant. It was a covenant that was made with a called-out people. Yes, those people were Israelites. But it was not God's intention ever to say it was solely an Israelite covenant. And if a non-Israelite, a Gentile, a stranger, a foreigner, part of the mixed multitude, wanted to be a part of the Old Covenant, they could. Now apparently this process here made these people what we would call today a naturalized citizen of Israel.

Let us go to the book of Isaiah, chapter 56.

Isaiah 56:1 "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed."

What I want to do here with this verse is establish the time element that the major theme of this chapter is about. And now where we are going to get it from is that phrase "for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed."

Hold your finger there and let us chase these out in the New Testament, all the way back to the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 9:27-28 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Those who are eagerly waiting for Him are going to receive salvation at Christ's second appearing, or at His second coming. You might remember that one of the phrases back there in Isaiah 56 had to do with that it was time for His salvation to come. See, "My salvation is about to come." We are tying together the words. When is that time of salvation to come? Well, that time of salvation to come is when Christ appears the second time.

And now back in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 11:15-18 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and would destroy those who destroy the earth."

Now everybody knows that the seventh trump announces the arrival or the coming of Jesus Christ. And when Christ comes, salvation will also appear.

Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."

Another announcement there that salvation is going to come at the appearing of Christ. You know we can feed that back into Isaiah 56. He is talking about a period of time when salvation is near and God's righteousness is to be revealed, and that is at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The timing of Isaiah 56, according to verse 1, is right now, just before salvation is to appear. Now it is in this context that the Sabbath appears.

Isaiah 56:2 "Blessed is the man who does this [When? Just before God's salvation appears.], and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

The Sabbath is now seen in a context just before the return of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 56:3 Do not let the son of the foreigner [the Gentile, the stranger] who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying [He is saying this to the Gentile, "Don't you say this."], "The Lord has utterly separated me from His people"; . . .

Who is His people? His people are the church. And He is telling the Gentiles, "Don't you say this, that God has separated you from His people."

Isaiah 56:3-7 . . . nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree." For thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a palace and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the foreigner who joined themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer."

Now we have Gentiles in the 20th century whom God is telling that they are not to say that they are separated from God's people if they are keeping the Sabbath. That is pretty plain. The Gentiles, not just Israelites, but Gentiles in the 20th century just before the appearing of God's salvation are to be keeping God's Sabbath.

With that in mind, let us go back to the book of Acts. Let us begin in Acts 13, first of all, in verses 13 and 14.

Acts 13:13-14 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John [that is, Mark], departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

So here we find the apostle Paul going into a Gentile city. And as his custom was, he began his operations in a synagogue. He did that, of course, because there he would most likely come in contact with Jews and Gentiles who were keeping the Sabbath, so it would be a good point of reference from which to begin. That would be one barrier that would not have to be broken down because these people were already then keeping the Sabbath.

Now, in verse 42. Of course, in between there was trouble. The Jews rejected what Paul said.

Acts 13:42-43 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

You see, Paul had every opportunity here to straighten these people out. If he was the man who broke the way in the keeping of Sunday, into the keeping of the first day of the week, after they came out of Sabbath services and these people were begging him to talk to the next Sabbath, Paul could have

very easily said, "Well, we don't have to wait a whole week. Why don't you just come back tomorrow morning and we will have a Sunday morning service here." Well, they waited the whole week until the next Sabbath. So he passed Sunday up.

Acts 15:1-2 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them to go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

The assumption in many people's minds is that the whole law of God was involved in this decision that was made in Acts 15. Now it is not our assumption, but it is the assumption of the world. And so they lumped together such things as the keeping of the Sabbath with this chapter. And now if you will drop down to verse 14.

Acts 15:14-20 "Simon has declared how God [this is James speaking] at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.' Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

Now he did not say there that they should not keep the Ten Commandments. The sentence that was given does not mention any of the Ten Commandments. It does not mention the Sabbath, but it only mentions these things. Only the ritual law was involved, what most people would generally refer to as the law of Moses. Now verse 21 is very interesting. Here comes the reasoning behind what James said. It is a concluding statement.

Acts 15:21 "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Why did he add that? Because the Gentile converts were keeping the Sabbath!

The next question is, *where* were they keeping the Sabbath? They were keeping it in the synagogues with the Jews. You have to understand there were no local congregations all over the place as we have in this Pasadena area, across the United States. And so these people fellowshiped with the Jews, and what do you think the Jews were preaching about in their sermons on the Sabbath? They were preaching about keeping the Ten Commandments. And so what James was saying was we do not have to tell them about any of the rest because they are going to hear about keeping it from the Jews.

That is an interesting approach, is it not? I do not think that we would do anything similar today. Well, we do not have to say anything about that because they will hear it in the Baptist church. No, we do not do that. And I am sure that those people then would not have done it either, but in the early days of the church, when there were no congregations, there was at this time really no clear delineation between the Jews and the Christians. It was coming. In fact, this decision had a very great deal to do with it. And what Stephen had done had something to do with it too. But the split, I guess you might call it, between the Jewish faith and the Christian faith was something that evolved over a period of years. And we are going to be looking at something in Acts 21 tonight that had very much to do, too, with the splitting of the two away from one another, the continually growing antagonism.

The next one is in Acts 16, verse 12. Now incidentally (this is just really an aside), but there are those who feel that Hebrews the 7th chapter, which has to do with tithing (at least tithing is used within the chapter) but part of the reason that that was inserted was to give the Christian church a very clear definition on where their tithes were to go. Because apparently some of them were sending their tithes to the Temple. And what Hebrews 7 does is establish from a lawful authority, that is, from the church, that the tithes were to go to the church and not to the synagogue.

Back to Acts 16. Paul is in Philippi now.

Acts 16:12-15 and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. We were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she constrained [persuaded] us.

What is interesting here is that apparently there was no synagogue in the city. Now Paul waited until the Sabbath day and then on the Sabbath day he went to a place where apparently (I say apparently, because nobody knows for sure) Jews and/or Gentile proselytes had a tendency to gather on the Sabbath day. That is, a place of prayer, and what would be better than a nice place by the river. Maybe a little green glade there somewhere and people would come there and meditate and maybe talk about the Bible, talk about God, whatever. It would have undoubtedly a Jewish slant to it, but Paul apparently knew where to go. He knew either from the scuttlebutt around the city or he knew that that would be the kind of place that the Jews or their proselytes would likely to go. See, he waited till the Sabbath. He did not go down there on just any old day, but Luke faithfully records that it was done on the Sabbath.

Acts 18:1-4 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

And then we want to drop all the way down to verse 11. After getting a vision from God it says that,

Acts 18:11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Now if there is any place in the New Testament that gives strong authority for the keeping of the Sabbath, this ought to be it. He had 18 months to tell them that there is another day and to train them in the keeping of that day. But he did not do it! For 18 solid months he kept the Sabbath, week after week, with these people who were his converts. Now undoubtedly right within the context, it says there that he was by occupation a tent maker. The other days of the week, he was working, but on the Sabbath, he stopped and preached on those days. So pretty good authority, I would say right there.

Let us go back to I Corinthians 11, verse 1. Now this is interesting because it is written to the Corinthians. And Acts 18:1 we have the founding, the raising up, the nurturing of the Corinthian church. So, Paul in his letter says,

I Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions as I delivered them to you.

Now back to verse 1.

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Imitate what? The traditions.

Let us go back to Luke 4, verse 16, at the beginning of Christ's ministry.

Luke 4:16 So He came to Nazareth [Christ], where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

Acts 17:1-2 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to

them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

Now you put them all together. Paul said, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." He made it clear that what we were to imitate, what the Corinthians were to imitate, were the traditions. We found back in Luke 4:16 that it was Christ's custom, His tradition, to keep the Sabbath as God had commanded it. And then back to Acts 17, and we find that it was Paul's custom to keep the Sabbath as well. So Paul followed Christ and then he commanded the Gentile converts to follow him as he followed Christ. That ought to be pretty clear that not only is there no authority for the keeping of Sunday, on the contrary, there is every indication that the apostle Paul, who was supposed to have been the man that gave Christians the liberty to worship on any day they want, he kept the same day Christ did, and he did it faithfully everywhere he went. So there is just no argument. If someone is going to base his keeping of Sunday on the Bible, he has no argument.

Let us go back to Acts 20 and we will get a running start into Acts 21. Paul had just come off a very successful three-year stay in the city of Ephesus. It was longer than he had stayed in any other place in any journey that he had made. Incidentally, I just read this week something that might give you just a little bit of food for thought. But on Paul's second journey, the distance that he covered was about 2,000 miles, and most of that was walked. It is just an incredible feat. Maybe I should have said Paul had incredible feet. And we think we rough it when we drive to someplace like Big Sandy for the Feast. I will tell you, that man had a real labor of love his whole life. He really devoted himself to it. And he must be one of the champion walkers of all time. He just did a great deal of it.

At any rate, he left Ephesus and it was his intention to go back over to the cities where he had started churches in Greece and then from there he was going to go up into Macedonia, go to Corinth, and then go to Jerusalem. But what happened was he heard about a plot that the Jews had. They were out to get him. This is while he was in Corinth, so he backtracked, went north again up into Macedonia, came down into western Asia Minor, into western Turkey, and then he hopped on a boat and he was on his way to Jerusalem. So that is what chapter 20 basically concerns itself with.

Now the bulk of the chapter has to do with the farewell message that he gave to the Ephesian elders. You might remember that he bypassed the city of Ephesus on the way back, and we can only speculate as to why he did it. It seems very likely that he did not want to come face to face with the church. It either would have been a very heart-tugging situation, emotional time for him that he just did not want to face, and to face the elders, as we find later in the chapter, was hard enough. Indeed, that they were breaking his heart, because he felt so badly because he felt that he would never see them again, and indeed he never did see them again. In addition to that, he might have feared that it would have been dangerous for himself to go back there and maybe he would have stirred up trouble unnecessarily for the church.

But at any rate, he went back there to Miletus, which was 30 miles south, and called for the elders. They came down and Paul basically told them that he had not withheld anything that he knew about the way of God from them. He had faithfully preached to them and that he encouraged them to imitate him, to be like Christ, to adopt the approach or the philosophy of life, if you want to put it that way, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. It is quite a conclusion to his ministry to those people. He kind of summed everything up in one succinct statement.

And then in chapter 21, which we are going to go into tonight, Paul continues on his journey. I think that I mentioned to you before that the apostle Paul did not know it, but this was the end of his evangelistic campaigns. It was not his intention that it be the end. He intended to go back to Jerusalem, and he was going to go to from there to Rome, and he was going to use Rome as a springboard for going over into Spain, possibly into southern France. But as far as we know, he never did it. Because once he got to Jerusalem, the whole world turned upside down for him and he spent his time he got to Rome, but he never got any further than that as far as we know.

One of the things you want to watch out for in this chapter is a parallel. I was probably intentional on the part of Luke when he composed this book. But he drew a parallel between Paul's journey to Jerusalem and Jesus going from Galilee to Jerusalem on His last trip to the city. Now that had occurred about 26 or 27 years before the apostle Paul was going. But the parallels are very interesting.

I think that most of you are familiar with some of these from the life of Christ. I do not think that I need to actually turn back to the scriptures that show very clearly what the parallels are. But they are this.

First of all, in both cases there was a plot by the Jews to kill both Christ and Paul. Jesus' disciples knew that because Jesus told them. The Jews were out to get them. Now we find in Acts 20:3 that he stayed three months and when the Jews plotted against him, as he was about to sail to Syria, then he decided to return to Macedonia. Then in chapter 20, verse 22 he says,

Acts 20:22-24 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulation await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

So in both cases, there was a plot.

Secondly, in both cases, there was a handing over to the Gentiles. When Jesus got to Jerusalem, He was taken into custody by the high priest and his gang. And then after a trial—it was a mockery—He was handed over to the Roman, Pilate. Same thing with Paul. We are going to see he gets to Jerusalem and the plot nabs him at the temple. And although he was not handed over to the Romans, he was forcibly taken by the Romans, he nonetheless ends up the chapter in Roman hands. Another similarity.

Third, in both cases there was a triple prediction on the trip. The trip of Jesus and also the trip of Paul. But when they got to Jerusalem, they were going to be taken. We just read one of them there in Acts 20:22. I will not go through them all.

Fourth, in both cases, another parallel, there was a steadfast resolution on the part of Jesus and on the part of Paul to fulfill God's will and go there regardless.

Fifth, there is a resignation to God's will. Now in Jesus' case, He knew He was going to die. In Paul's case, he did not know. He knew there was a lot of trouble coming and that he might die, but in any case, he resigned himself to it and went anyway.

Let us begin now in chapter 21.

Acts 21:1 Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course, we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara.

It says "when we had departed." It is rather mild in the English. In the Greek, it says that he had to "tear himself away." When we tore ourselves away is what it literally says, meaning that he was heartbroken about leaving. He really did not want to leave, but he had to leave, kind of thing.

Now each one of these places that is mentioned is about a one day's journey by a sailboat.

Acts 21:2 And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.

So they went from a smaller ship to a larger ship, one that was going to be sailing the Mediterranean out a little bit further and was going to go to Syria.

Acts 21:3 And when we sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left [I take it that he means that the island was on the left, meaning to the north of the ship as they were sailing east.], sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload cargo.

According to the commentators, they say it took him probably about five days to make that sail, the one where he said he was going past Syria.

Acts 21:4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

We find that in chapter 11, verse 19, the church in that city was raised up by Hellenists, who fled from Jerusalem at the time of the persecution that arose around the preaching of Stephen and the nasty work that the apostle Paul was doing. So it scattered those people and they went up, some of them went up into Tyre and they preached there and a church was raised up.

Now he stayed there for seven days. The reason I mention this is because earlier it says that he had to kind of wrench himself away from things (that was in 20:16) because he wanted to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. It gives the impression there that he did not have much time. Now we find here he gets to Tyre, and if he was really in a hurry, then he would have generally then just gotten there, got on the next ship that left, or maybe even walked all the way, but instead he stayed there for seven days, which indicates either he made awfully good time or he began to think about when he should arrive in Jerusalem and that maybe it would be best to arrive in Jerusalem just before Pentecost. And maybe it would be best to wait until there were large crowds of people streaming into the city and he would be far less conspicuous in doing something like that. And so he began to see that it might be better if he just waited a little bit and timed his arrival in Jerusalem a little bit better.

So here he is being warned, "Don't go there." Now, we might stop to consider something here. On the one hand, Paul feels the compulsion to go there. On the other hand, there are these warning signs that appear to be coming from God's Spirit. It even says there that "they told Paul through the Spirit." Now it almost seems as though there is a contradiction here. On the one hand, Paul feels a compulsion by the Spirit of God. And on the other hand, all these people feel, apparently by the same Spirit, that Paul ought not to go. Right?

Well, I do not think it was that way at all. I think what was happening here is that God wanted to make sure that the apostle Paul was well prepared by the time he got to Jerusalem and understand fully and clearly that yes, though He did want Him to go to Jerusalem, He wanted him to understand that it was going to be something dangerous. Now maybe He wanted to test the apostle Paul to see how resolutely he was set to do the will of God. Whether it was just going to be something where he would beg off at the last moment because of his fear, or whether he was going to have the faith to know that God would be with him regardless.

Now, you might think about this. As far as we know to this time, part of Paul's commission had not yet been fulfilled: the commission that was given to him by Christ that he was going to appear before kings and that God would not let him die until that part of that commission was fulfilled. I am sure he did not know how it was going to work out. And there were not very many kings in Jerusalem, but somehow or another he must have had some kind of an inkling that Jerusalem had something to do with getting before kings.

There was one other thing that was driving him there. Does anybody know what it was? It was in the last Bible study. See if you can remember anything from it. [answers from the audience which cannot be heard]. What it was is he had to take the offering there, the collection. That was going to be very important because what it was going to be was an attempt by Paul to show the church in Jerusalem that the Gentiles loved them. That they were united with them, that they had concern for them, and that this church, you know, that all the love or whatever was not a one way street. So he was going to use it, if I can put it that way, as a ploy to help the Jews to understand that indeed the Gentiles were a part of the church and that they were concerned for them.

Acts 21:5-6 When we had come to the end of those days [that is, the end of those seven 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. When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

In a way, it is quite a tribute. Again, from the book of Acts we have no indication that Paul was ever in Tyre before. But in seven days, somehow or another, these people had such an attachment for him, not only did the elders go, it looks like practically the whole congregation, including the wives, including the children, went out to say goodbye to him. He must have had a pretty good impact on them. At any rate, we get another scene there. It is somewhat reminiscent of Miletus.

Acts 21:7 And when we finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.

Now Ptolemais' name has changed through the years, and it is now called either Acre (pronounced au-ker), and on some maps it is called Akko. There is the remains of a very famous crusade castle there that was built during the Crusades, but that is at Acre.

Acts 21:8-9 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesized.

Caesarea was another day's journey. It was about 30 some miles from Ptolemais. And this Philip is the same man who was the deacon of Acts 6, and then he was also the man of Acts 8 who went up into Samaria, and there he preached, and of course one of the "converts" was Simon Magus and that led to that confrontation between Simon Magus and Peter. He was the same man who was transported through the air, I guess, and met the Ethiopian eunuch, and then he was taken away from there and we find him down on the sea coast, around Gaza, which is in the southeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea, and God traces his journey now all the way up to Caesarea, where Philip has established himself. There is a church there apparently, and we find that he has four unmarried daughters.

Luke calls these ladies prophetesses, but he does not say how or what they prophesized. Now it is pretty clear from I Corinthians 14 that their prophesying was not of the nature of something that was done before a congregation, so it leaves us hanging. Now to prophesy does not necessarily mean to preach. It means to speak under inspiration. Now what did they teach? Or what kind of inspiration did they get? Well, we are just left hanging. They gave no prophecy at all here so we do not know whether they were foretelling some event and earned the reputation of prophesying or whether they were forth-telling in the sense that they were teaching under some kind of inspiration.

One source I read had a thought. I will just throw it out at you for what it is worth. I have no idea whether it is right or not. But he wondered whether these ladies might have been the source of a lot of the earlier things in the book of Acts because Paul was not there. And under inspiration, there was

their dad, Philip, who was right in on the ground floor, right from the very beginning, apparently, and that maybe these ladies were already old enough to recall some of those events and that they passed some of that stuff on to Luke under inspiration. Who knows? But maybe they did provide some details that were helpful to them.

Acts 21:10 And as we stayed many days, . . .

Now it begins to become pretty obvious that Paul was dragging his feet about going to Jerusalem. And when I say dragging his feet, I do not mean in fear. I mean that he is timing his arrival and he is going to arrive, he feels, at a time that is just right. Okay, we run into the prophet Agabus. Now we have already come in contact with this man all the way back in chapter 11. You might recall that he was a man who prophesized that there was going to be a long drought, and indeed it came. Now here is Paul coming back with a collection to help relieve the people in Jerusalem, the saints that are there from the drought that this Agabus had previously prophesized about. Maybe. Maybe it is a different drought, I do not know. But Agabus is still around. Now he is going to prophesy again. So it says,

Acts 21:11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, . . .

What kind of belt? It was not likely the kind that you and I wear that are leather. The common thought is that it was like a cloth girdle that went around the middle, more like what we would call a sash that could be tied in a knot. There he took it off and he wrapped it around his own hands and feet. Now if it was one belt or one sash, it was pretty long because he had to wrap it around his own feet. Maybe tie it, bind it; it says he bound it, and then it went all the way up into his arms and he wrapped his own arms and hands in it.

Acts 21:11 . . . and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him to the hands of the Gentiles.'"

This was the kind of prophecy that the Old Testament prophets often gave where there was a dramatic enacting. Remember Ezekiel laying on his one

side, then Ezekiel laying on his other side, and then he was stabbing the hair with with the knife, you know, all kinds of things like that where there were dramatic actions that went along with the verbal part of the prophecy. So we kind of have a remnant of the Old Testament here in the New Testament.

So we find that in the fulfillment of this prophecy, that it did not work out exactly right in the sense that every detail as far as the narrative in the book of Acts shows. We will get to that in a little bit. But the Jews did bind Paul, and they were responsible for Paul being handed over to the Romans. And of course the Romans held him even though they had no charge. We are going to see that. It does not seem as though people deal very fairly often. They had about as much charge for holding Paul as the Jews had for holding Jesus. There is no charge at all, really. Nothing true anyway.

Acts 21:12-13 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 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."

What this does is that it shows very clearly Paul's willingness, despite all the warnings that God is giving him, that he is resolutely set to obey God's will. And you know, today we would say, "Come on, bug off!" That kind of thing. He was more courteous and told them that this grief was tearing at his heart. And I am sure that that really, I do not want to use the word offended, but it was effective anyway, I am sure, in getting them off his back.

Acts 21:14 So when he could not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

Now if you go back to Romans 15, remember Paul wrote Romans from Corinth and Corinth was where Paul began his journey back to Jerusalem. So going to Jerusalem was on his mind.

Romans 15:30-33 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered

from those in Judea who do not believe, that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Paul knew when he wrote this from Corinth that his reception in Jerusalem is going to be far less than cordial and he was determined nonetheless to go back. And his friends that he was defying, I guess you would put it, could only hope that the end of this journey would not be what they feared. See, what they feared was that he was going to die.

Acts 21:15-16 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. [He is undoubtedly on foot.] Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

This final leg into Jerusalem. From Caesarea it was about 65 miles and his host apparently had come up to Caesarea and was escorting the apostle Paul in. Now this Mnason was probably a Hellenist. Those were the people who were Greek speaking and it is very likely that those Jews from Jerusalem who would be the ones most likely to have more traditional views, would have been less likely to have wanted the apostle Paul to be staying at their home. We are going to see why in a little bit.

Acts 21:17-18 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all of the elders were present.

He received a warm reception. And the first one here in verse 17 was probably at this Mnason's house. The second one, in verse 18, was probably, well, I guess we would have to call it a headquarters. I do not know whether they had such a thing, whether it was at someone's home, but somewhere a little bit further into the city. There are those who feel that it is very likely that this Mnason actually lived in a suburb of Jerusalem and not in the city, and that it was considered that there would be the best place from which Paul could operate, somewhere just outside of the city and in the home of somebody who was a Hellenist rather than a Jew with more traditional views.

The Hellenists, remember, were Jews, but they were Greek speaking Jews or Greek was their major language anyway.

Acts 21:19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

It was important that Paul do what he was going to do before as many people as possible. One thing he was going to do, of course, was to report on what had occurred on his missionary journey so that they would be up to speed on what was accomplished, maybe how many conversions, how many campaigns he had, what cities he had gone into, what persecutions, what deliverances had come, how many people were in the congregations, who was pastoring them. He was just bringing them up to speed in every aspect of what he was doing.

The second reason that he was there, of course, was to bring the offering or the collection that had been collected from the Gentile church and presented before the Jerusalem church. Now this really was something that was in a way rather touchy. The reason is this: it is not that the church there would have been ungrateful for receiving it. There might have been some there who would have been ungrateful for receiving it, but I think overwhelmingly it shows here in verse 18 that James and all the elders were present, and they responded very positively to the things that the apostle Paul told them. I am sure that they also responded very positively to the gift that was given, but they had to be careful. And the reason they had to be careful was because of the Jews. The unconverted Jews, the ones in the city, who would very likely stir up trouble when they came to understand that here were these Christians who were receiving gifts from Gentiles.

To the Jew, that would have been something that was tainted, something that a Jew should never bend to accepting. Now to Paul, he wanted this collection to be viewed by those in the church as a gift of love and of concern. And I am sure that he did not in any way want anybody in the church to construe it as a bribe—a bribe for cooperation or for acceptance of the Gentiles on the basis of something given. So it was something that had to be done with utmost discretion and care in order that it not look as though it was simply a way of currying favor from these people.

Now the Jerusalem church was caught in a delicate political religious situation. You might recall the time. We are at some time after 56 AD, probably close to 58 AD by this time. The Jewish rebellion against Rome was underway. It had not reached the stage yet where there was any kind of fighting, but Jewish nationalism was rising. It would begin to peak sometime around 66-67 AD. And the Jews were becoming more and more suspicious and resentful of anything that had a Gentile taint to it.

In addition to that, there were a rising number of Gentile converts in Jerusalem to the Christian faith, which was fueling the problem. Thus, you see, it was making Christianity look more and more like a Gentile religion that was growing, prospering, or whatever, right within the heart of Judaism. Now the Jerusalem church wanted to have peace. They wanted to be able to continue to live in the city and worship there and I am sure the apostle Paul worried that the leaders of the Jerusalem church might feel constrained to reject the gift on the basis of the political situation and then how would that make all the Gentile converts feel? You see, this thing had the potential of dividing the church. And I am sure now one of the major reasons that Paul wanted to time his arrival in Jerusalem is that he would arrive there when there would be the most peace possible and that this thing would not be done in any way that was undercover. Everything would be out in the open.

Now what Paul did is he approached it in this manner. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done. He presented the gift from the standpoint of the blessings that God had given to the Gentile churches. That that was proof that God was with him in his mission to the Gentiles. So,

Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. [They accepted it.] And they said to him [the response is interesting], "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous of the law; . . .

Thousands of people believed the word. Zealous probably means more closely in its use here to our word "enthusiastic." It does not mean in this case wild-eyed. It does not have here a bad connotation, as in the sense of a zealot. It has the connotation of someone who is enthusiastic for obeying it.

Because apparently what we are talking about here are Christian converts. See, these are people who believe. Remember, I told you the Jerusalem church was getting bigger and bigger. He says thousands, myriads of people who believe and they are zealous for the law.

You might remember back in Acts 15 that the trouble in the church was being stirred up by former Pharisees. Now they were believers in the Christian sense. These are people who apparently had repented, they were baptized, they received the Spirit of God. They were in the church, but they still had Pharisaic hangovers. Now that is what he is talking about here in Acts 21:20. There are a lot of Jews in the church who are enthusiastic about the law. Now James and the elders did not share the views of these people. But what they were saying this for is that these people who are in the church are nonetheless going to be suspicious of your intentions here.

Now how are they going to solve this? How are they going to show these converts in the church who are enthusiastic about the law that Paul, these rumors that they have been hearing about you are not true. Okay, here comes the solution.

Acts 21:21-22 . . . 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 or to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you:

What is happening here is that James and the elders are essentially striking a bargain with Paul. You do this and we will accept the gift. And what we want you to do is to show these Jewish believers that you are not anti-law. Now what they felt was that that would defuse the situation and these people then would have no argument that the apostle Paul was against the law of God. So they then say,

Acts 21:23-24 We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, . . .

That was considered to be a good way of showing piety, for you to pay somebody else's expenses, the expenses that were incurred in the offerings at the Temple to conclude a vow.

Acts 21:24-25 . . . pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed [these rumors] concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe [Now notice the contrast between verse 20 and 25. We have believers who are enthusiastic for the law, and we have Gentiles who believe.], we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from idols [and so forth].

In other words, what they are telling him is that nothing has changed from the decision that was made there in Acts the 15th chapter.

Now what Paul had done in his preaching was simply to state that a relationship with God could not be established through the keeping of law. That is, that the keeping of law does not justify a person before God. A person is justified—made right before God—through the blood of Jesus Christ. But you see, what happens is that people hear something like that, they put their own little twist on it, and out of it came the rumor that Paul was against law. That was not the truth at all! There is a big difference between saying that one cannot justify himself before God by keeping law and that law is done away and that no one needs to keep it. So people were drawing their own conclusions and then those things got passed on, and those rumors then became almost a death knell for a man who said no such thing. This solution here seemed like a happy solution to a vexing problem.

Paul had no problem with that. He already said in I Corinthians 9 that he was prepared to live as one under the law. Remember, he said "to the Jew, I become as a Jew; to those under the law, I become as one under the law." He was prepared to do that, and so here he was going to actually enact it right out before these people and show them that there was nothing sinful in the keeping of the law, and he was not saying that it was wrong for a person to so do.

Acts 21:26 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, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

Now it seems like these four men were under a Nazarite vow. Paul could not undertake that because it took at least 30 days to run its course. Now we are going to find here in verse 27, at the end of seven days. . . . So what Paul did was this. It was a common practice, tradition, maybe a regulation law, whatever, policy, that any Israelite who traveled outside of the borders of Israel was considered to be ceremonially unclean. He had come in contact with Gentiles, been in a Gentile land, and on his way back then, he was ceremonially unclean, and he was not acceptable at the Temple until he was purified. Now that process of purification took seven days, so what Paul did, being that he had just traveled into the city, he then qualified to go under the seven-day purification, so he started the ball rolling. And then at the end of seven days, he would then present himself to the priests, and what they did is they paid for the offerings and the priest sprinkled some holy water on them. I mean, that is what we would say today, the water of absolution or something. He sprinkled it on them in a symbolic gesture and then the Jew was ceremonially clean. It had to be done on the third day and also the seventh day of that seven-day period.

Paul went for the third day and nothing happened. And Paul went to the seventh day, and as we are going to see here the bottom dropped out. Maybe when he went the third day, the rumors started spreading that Paul is in town. And so when the seventh day came, they were ready.

Acts 21:27 Now when the seven days were almost ended [it was actually the concluding time of the vow], the Jews from Asia [notice where they are from. Where was Asia? Asia was western Turkey. Asia was where Ephesus was], seeing him in the temple, . .

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Why were these people there? They were probably Jews who had traveled there as pilgrims to keep the Day of Pentecost. Is it not interesting that they show up at the same time Paul does? I wonder if it was the same group that was going to persecute him, you know, that made him detour and go back up

to Macedonia and down that way. I do not know. Okay, the trouble was stirred up by the pilgrims who were there for Pentecost.

Acts 21:27-29 . . . [they] stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 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." (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

They put their interpretations on his teachings and incidentally, they accused him of the same things that Paul had accused or been a part of the crowd that had accused Stephen of—of striking at the three pillars of the Jewish faith. He names them here: the people, the people of the land, called and chosen ones, the law that had been given by God, and this place, meaning the Temple.

Now, this thing about Trophimus is really stupid. In the first place, Paul knew as well as any Jew knew, that it meant death to take, not just to take, but for any Gentile, wittingly or unwittingly, to go into the Temple grounds. Now they could go into the Court of the Gentiles, which was the outer court. But there was a small fence, 2½ feet high, that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of Women. There were a few gates that went through it and spaced periodically on that fence was this inscription, "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the Temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." It was written in Latin and Greek. Two of those tablets, incidentally, have been found. One was found in 1871. The whole tablet written in Greek and two pieces of one were found in 1935, both also in Greek.

Now for Paul to do that would have been the height of stupidity. Paul was not a stupid man. He would not put anybody's life in jeopardy under any circumstance.

Secondly, Trophimus could read Greek. I mean, he was Greek educated. You see, he surely would have seen the sign, and for Trophimus to somehow or

another accidentally wander into the Court of Women would have been about the same amount of chance for that occurring as for you and me to wander into the Kremlin unnoticed. See, it was just like with Jesus; it was a totally trumped up charge, with absolutely no basis to it at all. And then verse 30,

Acts 21:30-32 And all the city was disturbed [and the uproar then spread quickly]; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. [The temple police must have done this so that they could keep the riot confined to the area outside the Court of the Women.] Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all of Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

Now the commander was right handy. He was actually on the Temple precincts in a tower that was at the northwest corner of the Temple precinct, the Tower of Antonio. Now this tower had two sets of stairs running from it. One set of stairs ran from the tower into the city. The other set of stairs ran from the tower directly to the Court of the Gentiles, so he only had to run out of the tower actually down two flights of stairs with a group of men, and there he was. I mean he was right there, so the riot could not have spread too far in that little bit of time.

Acts 21:33 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.

Now he is bound somewhat like Agabus says. None of the commentators feel that Paul was bound in his feet. He was certainly bound in his hands, and it says bound with two chains, and they feel that there was one centurion on one side and another centurion on the other side. One of the reasons why they say that is because later we are going to find that apparently Paul walked upstairs, the stairs where the guards were. And there is no mention of the chains being taken off. But at any rate, that is what they say. I think that there is certainly the possibility that the chains were on his arms and the

chains were on his feet and that there was enough room for him to walk. That possibility is there too.

Acts 21:33-35 and he asked who he was and what he had done. And some of the multitude cried one thing and some another. [Just a terrible tumult there.] So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. [back up to the tower of Antonio] When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers [Now does that not indicate that his feet were bound? Certainly it does.] because of the violence of the mob.

I think his feet were bound. He could not move fast enough. And those people who say that his feet were not bound and that the prophecy was not fulfilled, I do not think that is correct. I think it was fulfilled exactly as God said.

Acts 21:36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

That is the same thing that they said to Christ. That was the equivalent of saying, "Crucify him!" You know, put him to death, kill him.

Acts 21:37-40 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?" [He seemed surprised.] Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago raised an insurrection and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" [Now you can see what the commander thought that he was dealing with.] 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." [Paul was courteous and respectful, and the permission was quickly granted.] So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying, . . .