

## Paul's Capture in Jerusalem

Acts 21 is the third “we” section, using the first person plural, where Luke is included in his travels. The first time was when he went from Troas over to Philippi. It ended there so apparently Luke must have stayed at Philippi or went someplace else. It is picked up again when Paul is coming back through Macedonia from Achaia. He picks up Luke and Luke travels with him all the way to Miletus. Then in chapter 21 we begin his trip back to Jerusalem and this is the third “we” section.

### **Acts 21:1-3:**

And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

We started at Miletus which is just south of Ephesus on the coast. From there they sailed down the coast stopping at Patara and a couple of other places. Then they sail over past Cyprus, leaving it on the left, into Syria and to Tyre. That’s where the ship unlades her burden.

### **Acts 21:4:**

And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

What’s the will of the Lord? This is the first record of someone else telling Paul that he should not go to Jerusalem. They tell it to him through the spirit; by revelation. It wasn’t sense-knowledge, just a feeling, but it was by the spirit. Had Paul been told, before, not to go to Jerusalem? Yes, God had told Paul in every city, it says, “There are bonds and afflictions there. Don’t go Paul.” Now, after Paul didn’t heed the revelation, look how close he’s getting to Jerusalem. So, they warn him.

### **Acts 21:5-8:**

And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we* were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him.

Caesarea is down the coast from Ptolemais just a little bit further. We're getting closer and closer to Jerusalem. I'm not sure the exact mileage but I think it's about 80 miles or so from Jerusalem. This is in Samaria which is just north of Judea.

Philip was one of the seven that served tables like Stephen, the one that was stoned. Philip was also one of those seven. Philip was the one who met the Ethiopian eunuch. He was the one who witnessed to the people in Samaria, who never manifested holy spirit until Peter and John came down. Philip was the one who taught them there and did the signs miracles and wonders. Now he's the one here at Caesarea.

**Acts 21:9-12:**

And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

Here's the second and third warning to Paul from others.

**Acts 21:13:**

Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

That's contrary to what God says in other places like:

**Romans 12:1:**

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present

your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

God doesn't want you to die for him. He wants you to live for Him as long as you're on the Word. If you're not walking the Word, you're not born again, it doesn't make much difference. But when you're born again and walking by the spirit, it makes a big difference.

**Acts 21:14:**

And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

“ceased, saying,” – remember, no comma – “we ceased saying the will of the Lord be done.” We quit saying it and just let Paul do his own will.

**Acts 21:15-18:**

And after those days we took up our carriages [the things that they were carrying], and went up to Jerusalem.

There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

That ends the third “we” section. From now it's Paul, not including Luke, until Paul leaves this general area of Judea. Then we'll get into the fourth “we” section which is quite a bit later on.

He goes to Jerusalem and the brothers in the family of God gladly receive him and the day following, Paul goes to James and all the elders were there present. Remember James position in the body, apparently from all the things we've read? He may have been the one who sort of watched over everything. All the leaders were present.

**Acts 21:19:**

And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

“particularly” – one by one – He declared them, one by one. He declared everything God had done, one by one. He got right into the incidents.

“among the Gentiles by his ministry” – That was his ministry. He had been sent to the Gentiles. Like Peter had been sent to the circumcision, he had been sent to the

uncircumcision. When Paul stayed in his field, he did alright but when he went back to the Jew territory, to the circumcision, is where he got into trouble. God told him, “Get out. Go far hence unto the Gentiles. That’s where I want you to teach.” When he came back to the circumcision territory, he ran into some problems.

**Acts 21:20:**

And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

“the Lord” – Most of the critical Greek texts and manuscripts have “God” there. They glorified God. They said, “Isn’t this wonderful. All those Gentiles believed. Look at all those incidents. It’s really moving out there in all those places.”

“Isn’t it wonderful, the Gentiles are believing,” and in the same breath, “see brother how many thousands of Jews there are which believe and they’re all zealous of the law. They still want to circumcise. They still want to baptise. They still want to sacrifice. They still want to go through the offerings and all the other things.”

That verse is one of the big things that really binds people because there are those in the body who are still zealous of law. That’s many times where the big fight comes from. They still have a zeal. They want to keep people under bondage, under legalism. They can’t really see the greatness of God’s grace. They want it under law. You see how many thousands of Christians there are which believe today but how many are still zealous for baptism, ten commandments, the Lord’s prayer, the sermon on the mount, law.

**Acts 21:21:**

And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

“to forsake” – departure from - the word “departure” is the Greek word *apostasia*. What English word do we get from that? Apostasy, departure is what it means. This is used of the departure when Christ returns, as well; when the Christians depart. It means; to depart; go away from; departure.

He said, “You’re teaching departure from Moses. All these Jews have heard, Paul, that you’ve been teaching other Jews, out in the field that are among the Gentiles, departure from Moses; that they shouldn’t baptise any more or circumcise; that they shouldn’t keep the ten commandments or walk by them etc.” This could have been written in the twentieth century. I don’t know how much closer you could draw a picture of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church than what you’re living in, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This stuff looks like it was written today.

“customs” – *ethos* – a procedure prescribed by law or tradition. What English word do we get from that? Ethics.

He says, “They understand that you’ve been telling them to depart from Moses. It’s not bad telling the Gentiles that but when you tell the Jews that...

**Acts 21:22:**

What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

“You can’t keep it a secret. You can’t hide in here all the time. They’re going to come together and they’re going to find out you’re here, Paul.”

**Acts 21:23-24:**

Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

They’re telling Paul, “Why don’t you just go through this ceremony to show them that you’re still a Jew at heart. You still keep the law and walk orderly. Just vow the vow and get your head shaven.”

In Acts 18:18, before Paul went to Jerusalem after his second itinerary, it says:

**Acts 18:18:**

And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into [toward] Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

They made a certain vow. Then there was a period that they kept this vow and at the end of that, they would shave their heads or the priest in the synagogue or temple would. To find out what this is talking about, we’re going to go to Numbers 6.

**Numbers 6:1-2:**

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate *themselves* to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate *themselves* unto the LORD:

There it is. A Nazarite is one who is separate. That's what it means. That was a term that was used to describe such an individual; one who is separate. It says, "You vow a vow of a Nazarite (one who is separate) to separate themselves to the Lord. It's like being sanctified. What does it mean? Set apart. They would vow a vow to set themselves aside for a few days, like sanctification, to set themselves apart unto the Lord. They wouldn't carry on with a lot of the worldly things for a while and they would just be separate. Just them and Father have a talk. That's the type of vow it was.

**Numbers 6:3-21:**

He shall separate *himself* from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.

All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.

All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth *himself* unto the LORD, he shall be holy, *and* shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.

All the days that he separateth *himself* unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body.

He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God *is* upon his head.

All the days of his separation he *is* holy [sanctified] unto the LORD.

And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it.

And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:

And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day.

And he shall consecrate unto the LORD the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled. [he's got to start over again]

And this *is* the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:

And he shall offer his offering unto the LORD, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings,

And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings.

And the priest shall bring *them* before the LORD, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering:

And he shall offer the ram *for* a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat offering, and his drink offering.

And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put *it* in the fire which *is* under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.

And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put *them* upon the hands of the Nazarite, after *the hair of* his separation is shaven:

And the priest shall wave them *for* a wave offering before the LORD: this *is* holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine.

This *is* the law of the Nazarite [separated one] who hath vowed, *and of* his offering unto the LORD for his separation, beside *that* that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation.

What did they do? They vowed a vow. Then for seven days he was separate, had to observe certain things; couldn't drink strong drink or a lot of other things. Then on the eighth day he got a close haircut, a shave and that's when he brought all the things to sacrifice for his separation. If you were a life long Nazarite then you went through this whole trip for your life. There's a lot more to it than what I understand but that's the basic law.

Back in Acts there were four men who vowed a vow. What they were telling Paul was, “We want you to vow a vow.” Then at the end of that period of seven days they would shave their heads.

**Acts 21:24:**

Then take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

In other words, “Paul, you’re set apart, you’re sanctified, that you still separate yourself unto the Lord.”

**Acts 21:26-27:**

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

Why this calls this “purification” I guess it’s to purify Paul for the thing. I think sanctification would be sort of neat here. Wouldn’t it? There’s only a changing of two letters in those two words that would change it from purification to sanctification in the Greek. I don’t know. There was no text that had sanctification but anyway they would be purified I suppose, in that sense. That’s what they wanted him to do; to separate himself.

**Acts 21:25:**

As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

What does that sound like? Acts 15, the Jerusalem council.

**Acts 21:26:**

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

The offering would have been on the eighth day, after the seven, and that’s when they would get the haircut.



**Acts 21:27:**

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

This was Pentecost. He had left Macedonia right after the feast of unleavened bread. He came down to Jerusalem to be there for Pentecost. Now he's in this vow period, purifying himself but there were others who would come in for these feasts. On the original Pentecost in Acts there were devout Jews out of every nation. Here were Jews from Asia and they saw Paul toward the end of those seven days.

**Acts 21:28-29:**

Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

(For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

Remember who Trophimus was? He was one of those in Acts chapter 20.

**Acts 20:4:**

And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

Trophimus was one of those who travelled with Paul, one of his companions in travel. He had come all the way with Luke and Paul down to Jerusalem. I don't think he was the only one. There was another one. I think it was Aristarchus who later travelled with Paul when he went toward Rome. Maybe all nine or eight of them went down to Jerusalem when Paul went down. I don't know. Trophimus was an Ephesian. If he's an Ephesian, is he from Asia? Yes, that agrees with what it says in chapter 20.

First of all, they were zealous for the law. There's always envy involved. There's always pride involved because you stick by the law; you hate to give it up. You get so ingrained in tradition, those stupid habit patterns that are in your mind that are contrary to the Word and it's hard to kick the habit.

Then they brought all these false accusations against Paul saying, "He's polluted this holy place; contaminated the place."

A third thing involved is supposition. They made accusations and those accusations were not based on fact. They didn't have their facts straight. They "supposed" that Paul

had brought this Trophimus fellow into the temple. They hadn't seen it but they'd seen Trophimus around.

Zealous of the law, false accusations and suppositions and when you build a case like that in court, it will stand – **ha** – not when you get the facts.

**Acts 21:30-31:**

And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

“chief captain” – *chiliarchos* – *chilios* – *archos* comes from *archē* meaning; the leader; the beginning; the head. *Chiliarchos* is the head of a thousand. It's not the word *hekatontarchos*. *Hekaton* means a hundred. *Hekatonarchos* would be the leader of a hundred. A centurion is the leader of a hundred. Century means a hundred years. A centurion is a *hekatontarchos* in the Greek. The *chiliarchos* is the leader of a thousand. He's the one who's over the centurions who are over their hundreds. The *chiliarchos* is the chief captain here of the band. He was the ruler over the thousand.

**Acts 21:32:**

Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

He took centurions and all there hundreds of soldiers under them. He took a great big army out there because he knew those Jews liked to stir up things at times and especially those Sicarii. He was going out there with lots of soldiers.

They were beating Paul and were going to kill him but when they saw the chief captain and the Roman soldiers, they stopped.

**Acts 21:33-34:**

Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

In Jerusalem you've got the temple area, a great big area. The Romans castle was higher than the temple wall so that they could keep an eye on the Jews. The Roman soldiers were going to bring Paul into the castle. That's the record of Paul's capture.

When you read on in the verses that follow, they take him to the castle but they stop on the stairs in verse 35.

**Acts 21:35-38:**

And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

“murderers” – sicarii – the Jews that walked around murdering

**Acts 21:39-40:**

But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew [Aramaic] tongue, saying,

In chapter 22 is Paul's first defence which he speaks to the Jews; his first defence after his imprisonment here in Jerusalem.

I want to cover something back where Paul made the vow.

**Acts 21:23:**

Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

That term is used in Acts 18:18 where Paul had vowed that same vow at Cenchrea. Before he had gone to Jerusalem he had separated himself.

**Acts 18:18:**

And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

It's used one more place, in James.

**James 5:15:**

And the prayer [vow] of faith [believing] shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Our vow today is not a vow of separation where you go through the ceremony of the law but it is a vow of believing that you separate yourself unto God and you just believe. You and God make a majority in every situation. You just walk.

The Greek word for vow is *euchē*.

That is Paul's capture at Jerusalem. He's on the stairs now ready to make his defence. From there, in chapter 22, all the way to chapter 26, he's in Jerusalem and in Caesarea, either in jail or making defences. He makes either 3 or 4 defences before he even gets out of Jerusalem into the Caesarea area. He sits in jail in Caesarea for 2 years and from there he goes to Rome. He's in that storm at sea that lasts 14 days. Finally the thing was shipwrecked and they escaped to an island. From there they go on to Rome. At Rome he talks to the Jews and they say, "Well, we didn't hear that there were any real problems. Nobody sent us word." It's at Rome that he writes Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians; the great books of the mystery. This is the start of Paul's prison journey.