

Comments About Acts 21

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Recently, I began a series of brief articles to discuss chapters in the book of Acts. This week, we will talk about chapter 21.

May this project encourage you to review the valuable history found in the book of Acts.

Overview of Paul's travels

As we entered into Acts 13, we began reading about Paul's missionary journeys. According to some Bible commentaries, the trips can be categorized in the following manner.

- First missionary journey—Acts 13:1 until Acts 14:28
- Second missionary journey—Acts 15:36 until Acts 18:22
- Third missionary journey—Acts 18:23 until Acts 21:16
- Trip to Rome—Acts 21:17 until Acts 28:31

Avoid Jerusalem

Throughout the book of Acts, the travels of various disciples are recorded. Such is true in Acts 21 (verses 1-7).

- Disciples told Paul not to travel to Jerusalem (verse 4).
- When the traveling disciples came to Caesarea, they entered the house of Philip and stayed there (verse 8).
- The prophet Agabus came from Judea and used Paul's belt to make a point against Paul going to Jerusalem (verses 10-11).
- The people pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem (verse 12).
- Paul explained that he was ready to go to Jerusalem and was willing to die in Jerusalem—for the name of the Lord Jesus (verse 13).
- The people accepted Paul's decision (verse 14), and disciples accompanied him to Jerusalem (verses 15-17).

Meeting with James

- Paul went to visit with James (verse 18).

■ Paul told James and the elders in great detail what God had done among the gentiles (verse 19).

Notice what the leaders in Jerusalem said to Paul.

Acts 21:20-25—“And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; 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 nor 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: 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, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.’ ”

■ Paul entered the temple (verse 26) and some of the Jews from Asia spoke against Paul (verses 27-28).

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.’ ”

■ The mob seized Paul (verses 30-36).

■ One person asked Paul if he was an Egyptian who had previously led an insurrection to lead 4,000 assassins into the wilderness (verse 38).

■ Paul denied that accusation and asked to give a defense of himself (verses 39-40).

■ His defense began in Acts 22.