

# Paul in Jerusalem

ACTS 21-23



# Lesson Outline:

- ▶ 1) Paul's journey to Jerusalem – Acts 21
- ▶ 2) Paul speaks to the people – Acts 22
- ▶ 3) Paul before the Sanhedrin – Acts 23



# Paul's journey to Jerusalem

## Acts 21:1-14

- ▶ The reach of the gospel
  - In 21:4, the text says that Paul and his companions were looking for believers in the area (they were in Tyre, which is part of Phoenicia).
  - The group is also said to have gone to Ptolemais (21:7) and Caesarea (21:8) where they went to see Philip who seems to have stayed there from the last mention of him in 8:40.
  - In Tyre, it says that the group was looking for believers, while the other times, it doesn't say the same thing. This suggests that Paul and his companions were more aware and connected to the believers in the later groups, compared to the first place where they seemingly had a general awareness of that group.
- ❖ What we are seeing here is how far along the gospel has stretched, whether directly or indirectly connecting to Paul. God has confirmed his word (1:8 – the main theme, or thesis of the book of Acts) through people like Paul, Philip, and others who spread the gospel through persecution, in the case of the believers in Tyre (11:19), a part of Phoenicia.
- ❖ We also are encouraged in seeing this confirmation of God's word, that whatever he says he will do in our lives, he is sure to accomplish. It is simply our responsibility to trust in him and follow his desire for our lives, through his word and by his Spirit.



# Paul's journey to Jerusalem

## Acts 21:1-14

- ▶ Paul's resolve to go to Jerusalem
- In 21:4, the text says that the believers who Paul stayed with told him not to go to Jerusalem. This serves to confirm what Paul has already been told that would happen to him from the previous chapter (20:22-24).
- Later, in meeting with Philip, a prophet named Agabus says that Paul would be bound and delivered to the Gentiles upon being in Jerusalem.
- While everyone was telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem, listen to what he says (21:13,14):

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.

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

- ❖ Paul was unwilling to be persuaded from going to Jerusalem. To borrow a current phrase, Paul understood the assignment – for God I live and for God I die. Nothing was going to separate him from the purpose he knew that he had to accomplish. No person or situation was going to dissuade him from accomplishing God's will.
- ❖ It is for us to reflect on the following type of questions. Can we say the same about our lives? Are we at the place where we are willing to go all out for Christ knowing that there are people who will come against us for doing so? Are we truly committed believers or do we brandish the name, having a form of godliness?



# Paul's journey to Jerusalem

Acts 21:15-40

## ► Paul's testimony

- When Paul arrives to Jerusalem, he goes to see the leaders, and shares his testimony.
- While the leaders are happy and glorify God, they also let Paul know that there are those Jews who believe he has been speaking against the law and have a plan to help him be safe. They ask him to assist some brothers who are keeping a vow, which would cause the Jews to see that he has no issue with the law.
- Paul goes along with the plan, but it is futile. He is seen by the Jews and a large group of them try to kill him.
- The captain of the guard was told about the situation and took soldiers to address the situation. Upon inquiring, he was getting different answers from the group, and decided to take Paul away in the hopes that he could figure things out.
- The text closes with Paul identifying that he is not a presumed troublemaker, but a Jew from Tarsus, and asks to address the people
- ❖ It is amazing that Paul would have such an experience, and still be moved to speak to the people. This is the mind of one who lives a sacrificial life before the Lord. He knows what is going to happen yet is committed to the cause despite what can happen to him.



# Paul speaks to the people

## Acts 22:1-21

### ► Paul in Jerusalem

- Paul speaks to the people and shares his testimony with them. He mentions his experiences that can be seen upon his conversion in Acts 9.
- In addition, he shares another experience with God from a time when he was in Jerusalem. It is not clear when this point took place, but it was prior to this point of coming back to Jerusalem.
- In this experience, God told Paul to leave because his testimony wouldn't be accepted. Paul thought his testimony would be accepted because having persecuted the church and stood against Stephen, and then converting to Christianity, he thought that would sound convincing. But the Lord told him that he was sending him to the Gentiles.
- ❖ What we can see hear is firstly the importance of sharing our testimony. We share our life and witness to those who don't now the Lord that they might hopefully come to the knowledge of him in faith.
- ❖ We also continue to see how God is working in Paul's life, even to this point. He has made room for him to speak even if the means or unconventional. We may not like how we get to the purpose of God in our lives, but we must be mindful that he is sovereign, and we do all that we do for HIS glory.



# Paul speaks to the people

Acts 22:22-30

- ▶ The pushback from the people
  - Unsurprisingly, the Jews got angry at the point that Paul mentions the Gentiles.
  - The Jews create a commotion and the captain decided to beat Paul in order to get answers. At this point Paul challenges him because Paul is a roman citizen, and the captain has no legal right to do what he's about to do.
  - The captain released Paul and instructed him to be heard before the Sanhedrin.
- ❖ The anger of the people to Paul is a reminder that there are those who will be completely antagonistic to the call of God on our lives. While they may not have our best interest, God will still provide and protect us so that his will would be accomplished.
- ❖ Paul is now going to speak to the Sanhedrin, which is a bigger platform than the group of people he was presently speaking to. God continues to provide more avenues for his purpose to be done.



# Paul before the Sanhedrin

## Acts 23

- ▶ Paul speaks to the Sanhedrin
- The Sanhedrin was the judicial counsel of the Jews.
- Paul begins to speak and immediately angers the priest who orders him to be hit in his mouth, feeling that Paul is out of order.
- Paul responds calling the priest a “whited wall.” This is like Jesus calling the Pharisees “whitewashed sepulchers.” The outside looks good but is covering up decay.
- It is pointed out that Paul was speaking against the high priest, to which he apologizes.
- ❖ It is so important that Luke accounts for this exchange with Paul and the priest. At times we don’t see that people in high levels of leadership, can make mistakes. They also can correct those mistakes. We can take such an example from Paul in this manner.



# Paul before the Sanhedrin

## Acts 23

- ▶ Paul speaks to the Sanhedrin
  - Paul realizes that there is a split in the Sanhedrin between Sadducees (don't believe in resurrection) and Pharisees (believe in resurrection). Recognizing that, he announces that he is a Pharisee, which causes the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin to find no fault in him and stirs up a great commotion.
  - The captain thought that they might kill Paul in the commission and took him away. While he was taken away, the Lord spoke to Paul encouraging him to that in the same way he has spoken in Jerusalem, he will do in Rome.
  - The end of the chapter has Paul finding out that there is a plot for his life, He alerts the captain and they make provisions for Paul's safe passage to go and speak to the governor
  - ❖ It's also interesting that Paul utilizes his station as a Pharisee to help himself. This lets us know that it's not just the things in ministry that God will use to help us, but in our daily lives.
  - ❖ And once again, throughout this experience God is ensuring that Paul can pursue his purpose. We can rest assured that God will always make provision to complete his purpose in our lives.