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By Dan Maines

Acts 21

Acts 21:1-3

Now when we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos, and on the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara; and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went on board and set sail. When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo.

† Luke's detailed travel notes confirm his presence as an eyewitness. These geographical details also match ancient

maritime routes.

Acts 21:4-6

After looking up the disciples, we stayed there for seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. Then we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

† The Spirit warned of coming danger, yet Paul was resolved. The farewell on the beach mirrors earlier farewells, filled with prayer and love.

Acts 21:7-9

When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brothers and sisters, we stayed with them for a day. On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and we 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 were prophetesses.

† Philip, first seen in Acts 6 and 8, reappears here. His daughters carried on the prophetic ministry, showing the Spirit's ongoing work.

Acts 21:10-11

As we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And he came to us and took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

† Agabus' symbolic prophecy paralleled Old Testament prophets like Jeremiah, who acted out messages. Paul's fate

was sealed in God's plan.

Acts 21:12-14

When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul replied, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And since he would not be persuaded, we became quiet, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

† Paul's courage echoed Christ's determination to go to Jerusalem, knowing suffering awaited. The submission to God's will was ultimate trust.

Acts 21:15-16

After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to stay.

† Mnason, an early disciple, hosted Paul. Hospitality played a key role in the church's strength.

Acts 21:17-20

After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us gladly. And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard about them, they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law."

† The Jerusalem church glorified God for Gentile conversions, yet Jewish believers still struggled with attachment to the Law.

Acts 21:21-22

"and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. So what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come."

† Rumors distorted Paul's teaching. He never rejected Jewish customs for Jews, only opposed imposing them on Gentiles.

Acts 21:23-26

"Therefore, do as we tell you: we have four men who have a vow upon themselves; take them along and purify yourself together with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; then everyone will know that there is nothing to the rumors which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also conform to keeping the Law. But regarding the Gentiles who have believed, we sent a letter, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality." Then Paul took along the men the next day, and after purifying himself together with them, he went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

† Paul willingly joined in the vow to show he was not hostile to the Law. His action was one of wisdom for peace, not compromise of the gospel.

Acts 21:27-29

When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who instructs everyone everywhere against our people, the Law, and this place; and besides, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place!" For they

had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they thought that Paul had brought him into the temple.

† False accusations fueled the riot. Paul was charged with defiling the temple, though he had not done so.

† Josephus (Wars 6.2.4) notes the strict Jewish laws regarding Gentiles in the temple, showing why this accusation enraged the crowd.

Acts 21:30-32

Then the whole city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. While they were intent on killing him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. He immediately took along soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

† Roman soldiers swiftly intervened to prevent a riot. The Romans kept close watch over the temple area from the Antonia Fortress.

Acts 21:33-36

Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done. But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. When Paul got to the stairs, it came about that he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; for the multitude of people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!"

† Paul was bound, fulfilling Agabus' prophecy. The mob's cry echoed the cry against Jesus: "Away with him!"

Acts 21:37-40

As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people." When he had given permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

- † The commander mistook Paul for an Egyptian rebel. Josephus (*Wars* 2.13.5) describes this Egyptian who led a revolt, confirming the background of the commander's question.
- † Paul's use of Hebrew gained the crowd's attention, showing his identity with his people even in the face of hostility.

How it applies to us today

- † God's will sometimes leads into suffering, but His purpose stands unshaken.
- † False accusations and hostility cannot stop God's mission.
- † Believers must be willing to endure misunderstanding and persecution for the name of Christ.
- † Like Paul, we must show wisdom, humility, and courage in defending the truth.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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confusion

† Suetonius, Life of Claudius 25.4 – Expulsion of Jews from Rome

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