

BIGGER THAN YOU

Lesson 20 O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem

Acts 21:1-36

Paul had said his last good-byes to the elders of the church in Ephesus. Now, in spite of warnings by church prophets and the Holy Spirit that he was facing prison and hardship, Paul chose his destination. Just as Jesus had set his face toward Jerusalem and the Cross, Paul set sail for Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish opposition against the Christian movement. He went, compelled by the Spirit, not knowing what he faced, with no desire except to complete the task the Lord had given him (Acts 20:24). Luke, the author of Acts, supplies the details of the journey because he was traveling with Paul – we are reading an eyewitness account.

Read Acts 21:1-16

1. Using the map on page 3, trace Paul's journey from Miletus, where Paul met the elders from Ephesus, to Tyre.
2. At Tyre, Paul stayed with the believers (disciples, verse 4) for a week and then said good-bye to them as he had to the Ephesian elders.
 - a. Described the farewell from verses 5-6.
 - b. What is so difficult about saying good-bye and making departures? Share your own such experiences.
3. At Caesarea, Paul stayed with Philip, the evangelist.
 - a. Look back to Acts 6:1-7 and 8:4-40 and recall what we read before about Philip.
 - b. In chapter 21, what do we learn about Philip's daughters?
 - c. At Philip's house another prophet, Agabus, came from Jerusalem. What did he do and say about Paul's future (verses 10-11)?
 - d. What was the reaction of others who heard (verses 12 and 14)?
 - e. What was Paul's response (verse 13)?
 - f. How do you explain Paul's determination? (See Acts 20:22-24.)
 - g. Many had warned Paul that he was facing suffering and prison and they advised him, even to the point of begging him, not to go to Jerusalem. Paul, in face of the danger, was compelled to go to Jerusalem. Have you ever chosen to take a difficult and dangerous course of action rather than seek safety? Share your story. What was the outcome?
4. For some insight into Paul's thinking about going to Jerusalem, read Romans 15:23-33. Find the verses that tell the following:
 - a. Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem to deliver an offering for the poor believers, which he had collected from Gentile churches. Verse _____
 - b. Paul considered his mission finished in the places to which he had traveled. Verse _____
 - c. After traveling to Jerusalem, Paul intended to visit the churches in Rome, on his way to plant the gospel in the unreached country of Spain. Verse _____

- d. Paul asked the Roman Church to pray for his rescue in Jerusalem and that the offering would be well-received.

Verse _____

Read Acts 21:17-26

5. When Paul and his traveling companions arrived in Jerusalem, how were they received by the church? To whom did they make a report about their mission among the Gentiles?
6. Those who heard Paul's report praised God and then raised an issue with Paul. What was the issue (verses 20-22)?
7. What did the church elders suggest that Paul do (verses 23-24)?
8. Paul had previously taken a temporary Nazirite vow at Cenchrea (see Acts 18:18). The requirements for this kind of vow are described in Num. 6:1-8. It involved a time of consecration to the Lord when the person taking the vow let their hair grow, maintained separation from all sources of uncleanness, and observed certain dietary restrictions. At the end of the vow, sacrifices were made and their hair was shaved and offered as a sacrifice. In Acts 21:26, Paul complied with the suggestion of the elders to join some other Jews in a 7-day purification vow. What did they hope to accomplish (verse 24)?

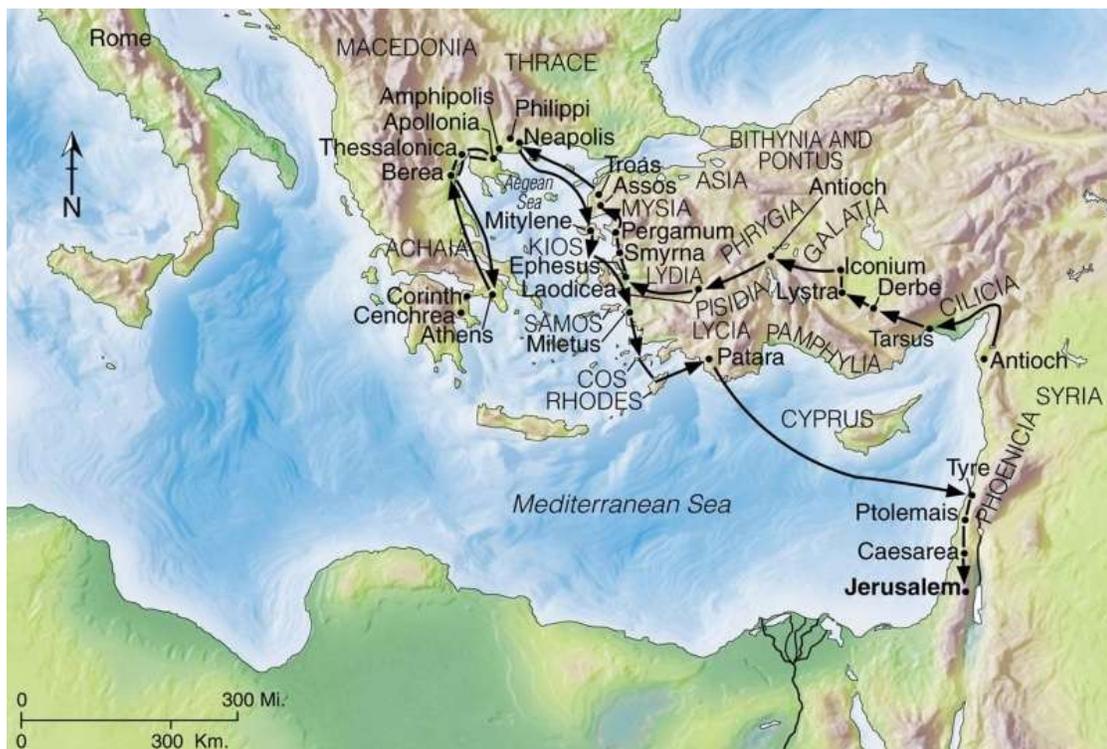
Read Acts 21:27-36

9. Some Jews from the province of Asia, perhaps from Ephesus, saw Paul at the temple in Jerusalem.
 - a. What did they do (verse 27)?
 - b. What accusations did they make against Paul (verses 28-29)?
 - c. What kept Paul from being killed (verse 31)?
 - d. Why did Paul end up arrested and in chains?
 10. Skim Acts 21:17-27 to determine about how long Paul was in Jerusalem before he was arrested. Did taking the Jewish vow accomplish what the church elders had hoped? Comment.
 11. From the time of the rule of King David, Jerusalem was the capital of Israel. King Solomon built the first permanent temple there, and Jerusalem became the center of Jewish worship. Thousands of Jews made pilgrimages to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the altar of the Temple of the Presence of the God of Israel.
 - a. Paradoxically, Jerusalem was also known as a city which killed the prophets of God. (See Matt. 23:29-39; Luke 13:34; Acts 7:51-53.) From all you know about the story of Jesus, the Book of Acts, and the hearts of human beings, explain what you think caused those who best knew of the presence of God to kill the ones He sent.
 - b. Jesus wept over the city as he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem just prior to his crucifixion. Read Luke 19:41-44. Jesus was looking into the future at the destruction of Jerusalem by a Roman army in 70 A.D. From Jesus's perspective, what was the cause of the impending destruction?
 - c. In Paul's letter to the church in Rome, he expressed his grief over the spiritual condition of his people, the Jews, who rejected Jesus in spite of all the blessings of God upon them. (Read Rom. 9:2-5, 30-32.) Reflect upon the far-reaching consequences of being mistaken about how to be saved (verse 32). Discuss.
-

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

12. Personal heart check. Is my concern in line with God's concern?
- When you look at your own city, are you brought to tears by the lost people?
 - Which is more important to you, your own safety and comfort, or carrying the message of salvation to lost people?
 - Read again Luke 19:41-44. Do you really know what will bring you peace? Have you told what you know to your neighbors?
 - When we send missionaries to the far places of the earth, do we realize the urgency of the opportunity because this is the "time of God's coming to them"?
 - Have we considered that the window of opportunity for responding to Jesus Christ could close in our own city and country, as it did for Jerusalem in 70 A.D.?
 - Pray for your own heart, your own neighbors, your city, and for lost people in the far reaches of the world.



You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8