



1. Review: This passage concludes Paul's third missionary journey, which began in 18:23. Where did Paul spend the most time on this journey, and what did he do there? (19:1; 19:8-11; 20:17-21; 20:31-35) How is his work there an example for us today as we serve Christ?
2. Who warned Paul along the way not to go to Jerusalem? How did Paul respond to these warnings? (20:22-24; 21:4; 21:10-14) Bible scholars have debated for centuries whether Paul should or should not have gone up to Jerusalem at this time; what do you think?
3. Paul received some very emotional farewells as he left these various cities (20:36-38; 21:5-6; 21:15-16). What does this tell us about Paul's effect on the lives of these believers?
4. What do we know about Philip from earlier in the book of Acts (6:2-5; 8:4-6; 8:26-29; 8:40)? He was last mentioned evangelizing at Caesarea about 20 years earlier, and by now he had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses (21:9). How might they be an illustration of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:34-38?
5. We have been building up to this Jerusalem visit since 19:21 when Paul was still in Ephesus. Along the way he had been collecting a gift for the needy saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-27; 2 Corinthians 8-9), and now he finally had the opportunity to deliver the gift himself in person. How do you think this gift fit into Paul's report in 21:18-19? How do you think the gift may have led to increased unity among the Jewish and Gentile believers of that day?
6. After each of Paul's three missionary journeys in Acts, we find a time when Paul gave a report to the believers about the work he had been doing while he had been away from them (14:26-28; 18:22-23a; 21:17-20a). What does this say about your role in our church when any of our missionaries returns from the field for a visit with us on furlough?
7. Paul does a very Jewish thing in 21:20-26 by participating with four Jewish believers who were under a vow, to show the Jews that he himself was not teaching Jews to forsake the Law. How does this illustrate what Paul had written a few years earlier in 1 Corinthians 9:20? Do you think that vows like this play any role in the lives of Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians (21:25)?
8. Apply it: In what area of your life might you find greater peace by falling silent and saying, "The will of the Lord be done!"? (21:14)



## Paul Returns to Jerusalem, with Warnings Leader Notes for Acts 21:1-26

Paul had been on his third missionary journey for about four years, with most of it spent in the city of Ephesus. There he had taught in the school of Tyrannus for two years, and the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. After visiting Macedonia and Achaia, Paul stopped in Miletus to visit the elders of the Ephesian church, where he gave them the first clue that the Holy Spirit had been telling him that bonds and affliction awaited him in Jerusalem.

After about a 600-mile sea journey, Paul spent a week visiting a group of disciples in Tyre, a city along the Mediterranean coast north of Israel. While he was there, these disciples kept telling him through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. After a heart-felt farewell of prayer on the beach, Paul continued on his sea journey and arrived in Caesarea a few days later. This was the seat of Roman government for the region, as we shall see in chapters 23-26. There the prophet Agabus (seen earlier in 11:28) warned Paul by the Spirit through a visual illustration using Paul's own belt that he would be bound in Jerusalem and delivered over to the Gentiles.

Paul's own traveling team, including Luke, and the locals begged him not to go on, but he resolutely proclaimed his loyalty to the Lord Jesus and could not be persuaded to stop. Paul would not give in. The question has often been raised as to whether Paul was right in not listening to all these warnings from the Holy Spirit and his fellow believers. Some say he should have yielded to the team, and the Lord would have found another way to get him to Rome. But others say Paul himself understood the Spirit's leading as warnings to him about what would happen, but not as a lack of permission to proceed (compare with 16:6-7). There is no way for us to know the answer to this age-old question before we reach heaven.

We met Philip earlier in chapters 6 and 8, where he ended up in Caesarea. Now we find him still there about 20 years later, still ministering as an evangelist, having raised four virgin daughters. Perhaps they had been dedicated to the Lord as virgins to serve Him in a special way (1 Corinthians 7:34-38). These daughters were prophetesses, but that's all we know about them. It does show us that the gift of prophecy was not limited to just men in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 11:5 is the only other verse that speaks of women using the spiritual gift of prophesying after the Spirit was given at Pentecost in Acts 2. There were several other prophetesses in the Old Testament, along with Anna in Luke 2:36-38 at Christ's birth.

Paul gave a report of his ministry among the Gentiles to the Jewish elders in v. 19, which led to them glorifying God. It must have been at this time that Paul and the traveling team delivered the financial gift from the Gentile churches for the needy saints (Romans 15:25-27). Even with all the challenges ahead, this would have certainly caused rejoicing among the Jewish believers, to know that Gentiles who had been reached through Paul cared about their needs!

The subject of vows comes up in the New Testament only here and briefly in Acts 18:18. The context in both cases seems to relate to the Nazirite vow of Numbers 6, part of the Jewish law. Paul placed himself voluntarily under the Law to reach Jews at times (1 Corinthians 9:20), and this appears to be that kind of situation. No Gentile Christians are ever described as making or keeping vows.

Paul started out trying to fulfill the requirements of the vow the other Jewish men had taken, but he was unable to complete the full seven days required for purification (v. 27). Come back next week to see how quickly things changed once Paul was recognized in the temple by Jews from Asia (the area where Ephesus was located). We hear nothing more about this vow, because Paul will soon be captured by the Jews and bound with chains by the Romans.

