

Chapter Twenty-One

Chapter 21

- In verses 1-6, we find Paul on his way from Ephesus to Jerusalem with a stopover in the city of Tyre.
 - What previously occurred here, according to Matthew 15:21-28? Do you see this as an early indication of a later purposeful outreach to the gentiles?
 - According to verse 4, Paul found disciples there. Do you think this may have been the fruit of Yeshua's prior outreach?
 - How do you feel when you arrive in a strange place and find "fellow believers"?
 - When these disciples warned Paul, through the Spirit, to not go up to Jerusalem, was this the first warning he had? See Acts 20:23.
 - After having spent a week with these believers and

their prayerful sendoff, how do you think this was encouraging to Paul and company?

- In verses 7-8, we see Paul and company at a short stopover but refreshed in spirit by a visit with more believers.
 - Have you ever traveled and stopped in a local congregation for fellowship, even though you didn't know anyone?
 - Isn't it amazing how, as believers, we can visit a congregation of "strangers" and yet experience "instant fellowship"?
- In verses 8-16, we see Paul and company arrive in Caesarea, near to Jerusalem, and stay with Philip and his family.
 - We recall Philip as the traveling evangelist from Acts 8. According to 8:40, he apparently finally settled down from his travels and had a family in Caesarea where we find him.
 - Luke tells of the prophet Agabus arriving. He previously recounted his prophetic ministry in Acts 11:28.

- What did this prophet Agabus say and do?
 - Was he warning Paul not to go on to Jerusalem?
 - According to verse 12, what did Paul's companions think and what was their counsel?
 - According to verse 13, what was Paul's firm response?
 - Is it possible that the reason for this prophecy was not to dissuade Paul from his intentions but to help his companions to understand and have faith when these things actually do occur to Paul?
 - According to verse 14, how did the disciples leave the issue?
 - Is placing our concerns and anxieties in the "will of the Lord" something we simply "tack on" at the end of our prayers or do we really embrace what that means for us?
- In verses 15-17, we see Paul and company and a few others going up to Jerusalem.
 - Traveling to attend a festival in Jerusalem would be

a joyous occasion, involving the singing of many psalms enroute.

- Do you think this communal experience may have helped with their fears about what may lay in store for Paul?
- How were Paul and company received by the brothers in Jerusalem?
- Verses 18-20 records Paul's missionary report to the Elders in Jerusalem.
 - Recall that Paul's previous report in Acts 15 was years prior to this.
 - According to verse 19, how detailed a debrief do you think his report was?
 - What was their response in verse 20?
- Verse 20 contains some interesting things deserving of mention. It includes the statement, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Judeans of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Torah".

- The Greek word “myriad” is normally rendered “ten thousand”.
- The text here states “many” myriads, so multiples of ten thousand are in view.
- The text further states “how many myriads”, so “many” multiples of ten thousand are in view.
- The point is, there may have been 30-40,000 or perhaps more Jewish believers in Jerusalem at that time.
- A final point is that “they are all zealous for the Torah”.
- If, as many church theologians and Bible teachers assert, the Torah was “done away with”, how is it that we find this record of a rather large number of Messianic, Torah-observant Jewish believers in Yeshua at this time, some thirty years or so after Yeshua sent out His disciples?
- In responding to the above question, some have suggested that these early believers were “still in bondage to the law” and had not yet grown in their understanding of grace versus law, as if that could ever be. How is that an unfounded and arrogant response?

Do they truly believe they have knowledge superior to those closest to the original source of “the faith once delivered unto the saints”?

- According to verse 21, what was the rumor that these Jewish believers had heard about Paul’s teaching?
 - Did Paul ever teach Jews to forsake Moses, referring to the Torah?
 - As recounted so far in the book of Acts, what was the consistent content of Paul’s teaching in all the congregations of Jews and gentiles he ministered in?
 - Did Paul ever teach Jews to forsake circumcision?
 - Didn’t he even circumcise Timothy, who would have been considered a gentile by the standard theology of the day?
 - Did Paul ever teach Jews to forsake traditions and customs that were not in violation of the Torah?
 - Why is it important to understand that Paul’s epistles to the Romans and Galatians had already been written prior to this incident?

- In those epistles, his words have often been twisted into an anti-Torah theology, when, in fact, he was merely teaching against a legalistic misuse of the Torah.
- Would Paul teach one thing and then turn around and do the opposite?
- Consider the irony that Paul is standing accused of essentially the same things that Stephen was accused of in Acts 6-7 where Paul stood in approval of the actions against him?
- Further consider the irony of almost 2,000 years of errant Christian anti-Torah theology that essentially agrees with these lies regarding both Stephen and Paul.
- What did the leadership and all the elders decide was the best course of action for Paul to do?
 - Verses 23-24 refer to Paul taking a Nazarite vow plus paying the expenses involved for four others which involved a sacrifice at the Temple.
 - What would such a public display of Torah observance demonstrate to these other Messianic Jews

who had heard these rumors regarding the content of Paul's teaching?

- According to verse 24, the leadership concluded that by Paul following their advice with such a public display of Torah observance, "Then all will know that there is no truth in the things that they have been informed about you, but that you yourself also walk, keeping the Torah".
 - Does this sound like the leadership knew these charges against Paul and his teachings were false?
 - If they did know these to be untrue statements regarding Paul and his teaching, why do so many theologians and Bible teachers today believe these false statements regarding Paul's teaching to be true?
- In verse 25, the leadership recalled their previous council in Acts 15, which Paul was also present for, regarding gentile inclusion and their universal disregard of the misuse of circumcision as "ritual conversion". Here they reiterated the basic content of that letter previously sent out to the congregations assuring them of their status as fellow believers, without having to "become Jews".

- In verse 26, what do we see Paul doing?
 - Do you think it would have been enough for Paul to simply issue a statement or a press release, print a leaflet or participate in a debate to settle the matter?
 - Why do you suppose his strongest statement was related to what he actually did?
- Verses 27-28 describes “some unbelieving Jews from the province of Asia”.
 - What did they do when they saw Paul?
 - Did Paul have previous trouble with unbelieving Jews attacking his message and his person?
 - Does resistance to the proclamation of the gospel ever cease?
- Verse 28 lists the charges they were making against Paul.
 - Did Paul teach against the people?
 - Did Paul teach against the Torah?
 - Did Paul teach against the Temple?
 - Did Paul bring gentiles into the Temple?

- Did Paul defile the Temple?
- Verse 29 explains the false assumption they were making.
- According to verse 30, what was the result of this commotion?
 - Do you see a parallel here with the mob mentality of the crowd Paul dealt with in Ephesus?
- In verses 31-32, what was the crowd attempting to do?
 - Was this action in violation of the very Torah they were accusing Paul of breaking?
 - What did it take to stop the civil disturbance?
- In verse 37, Paul sees an opportunity to make his case to the people.
 - Why do you suppose the commander of the soldiers was surprised to hear Paul speaking Greek?
- In verse 38, who did the commander think Paul might have been?
- How did Paul respond in verse 39?

- Might his background as a Jew from a prominent Greek speaking city explain why he knew the Greek language?
- In verse 40, Paul addressed the people.
 - In what language did he speak?
 - Why was that important?