

## The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020  
Jim Hoffman

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48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15:36
49 AD	Paul in Philippi	Acts 16
49 AD	Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens	Acts 17
51 AD	Paul in Corinth	Acts 18
54 AD	Paul in Ephesus	Acts 19
57 AD	Paul in Macedonia and Greece	Acts 20
59 AD	Paul Returns to Jerusalem	Acts 21 - 23
60 AD	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	Acts 24
62 AD	Paul Before Festus	Acts 25
62 AD	Paul Before Agrippa	Acts 26
62 AD	Paul Sails for Rome	Acts 27
62 AD	The Shipwreck	Acts 27:13
62 AD	Paul Ashore at Malta	Acts 28
62 AD	Paul Preaches at Rome	Acts 28:11

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 21:1 After saying farewell to the Ephesian elders, we sailed straight to the island of Cos. The next day we reached Rhodes and then went to Patara. 2 There we boarded a ship sailing for Phoenicia. 3 We sighted the island of Cyprus, passed it on our left, and landed at the harbor of Tyre, in Syria, where the ship was to unload its cargo. 4 We went ashore, found the local believers, and stayed with them a week. These believers prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem. 5 When we returned to the ship at the end of the week, the entire congregation, including women and children, left the city and came down to the shore with us. There we knelt, prayed, 6 and said our farewells. Then we went aboard, and they returned home. 7 The next stop after leaving Tyre was Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed for one day. NLT

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 21:8 The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food. 9 He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy. 10 Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. 11 He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'" 12 When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 13 But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." 14 When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." NLT

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- So again this topic of Paul's going to Jerusalem and the trouble that awaited him if he went arises.
- Agabus even makes this dramatic portrayal of what would happen to Paul if he went through with his intentions to go to Jerusalem.
- Remember "**prediction does not necessarily mean prohibition**" and in Paul's own words to the Philippians his going to jail furthered the gospel.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- Where do we get this idea that being in the center of God's will can't mean being in the center of the storm?
- Do we not see the utter folly of that? If that were so, then someone better explain to Jesus that he should never have gone to the cross!
- And Job would also testify that we can be in the center of God's will, walking righteously, and be in the crosshairs of the enemy all at one time.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 21:8 **The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food. 9 He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.**
- From what I've seen some families appear to be more gifted than others – but be careful how you measure this.
- Philip and his daughters had speaking gifts and therefore were more likely to have an observable impact than another family with background gifts.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- The words of Paul that really got my attention were these - **13 But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus."**
- Dare I say it? It seems that Paul is not only willing to be jailed and die for Christ, **but eager to do so!**
- Paul was certain that the gospel could not be confined so jail would be just one more place where he could preach.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 21:15 After this we packed our things and left for Jerusalem. 16 Some believers from Caesarea accompanied us, and they took us to the home of Mnason, a man originally from Cyprus and one of the early believers. 17 When we arrived, the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed us warmly. 18 The next day Paul went with us to meet with James, and all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present. 19 After greeting them, Paul gave a detailed account of the things God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 After hearing this, they praised God. And then they said, "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of Jews have also believed, and they all follow the law of Moses very seriously. NLT

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• "When we arrived, the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed us warmly. 18 The next day Paul went with us to meet with James, and all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present."

• Notice who is in charge of the Jerusalem church – the Roman Catholic church would have us believe it was Peter who led the early church.

• If that was so then why is Paul meeting with James – not the apostle James whom Herod killed, but our Lord's half brother.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• If you recall back in chapter 15 it was James along with Peter who are the key figures in the Jerusalem church, but it was James who announced the council's decision.

• By the time we get to chapter 21 nine years had passed and it would seem that Peter is now working in the background somewhere.

• **Lesson** – sometimes God will make a person prominent for a time and then cause them to recede at another time. (Esther – for such a time as this)

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 21:21 But the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. 22 What should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23 "Here's what we want you to do. We have four men here who have completed their vow. 24 Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved. Then everyone will know that the rumors are all false and that you yourself observe the Jewish laws. 25 "As for the Gentile believers, they should do what we already told them in a letter: They should abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality." NLT

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 21:21 But the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. What should we do?

• They could start by asking for validation of those reports. It is not beneath our enemy to fabricate lies.

• What is true is that we have no scriptural record that Paul ever said such things to Jewish converts so maybe "fake news" is not a new thing. 😊

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Whether what James and the church leaders in Jerusalem were given were just random rumors or intentional lies about Paul we do not know.

• However, false information is false information so it had to be dealt with.

• The Jerusalem church had a plan – speaking to Paul they said, "**They will certainly hear that you have come so here is what we want you to do.**" (paraphrase is mine)

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- And I know what you are thinking – why did they need a plan? Why not just speak the truth and let that truth lion speak for itself?
- Probably because what was told about Paul was so widely held that to have him simply state his side would have been like a “he said”, “she said”.
- So they get practical – they devised a plan for Paul to knock down all of those false rumors in a convincing way.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- What could be more convincing than to have Paul be seen participating in a Jewish ritual prescribed in the law?
- There is plenty of room here to be critical of the leaders in the Jerusalem church and Paul because at a minimum the plan is deceptive.
- To be sure, many have criticized Paul for agreeing to go along with their plan, but he did.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- **“We have four men here who have completed their vow. 24 Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved”**
- We are not told exactly what vow these four men were under, but many believe it was the Nazarite vow because it ends with the shaving of the head.
- Paul probably participated because it seemed like a harmless act that could be of great help.

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The Acts of the Apostles

It was not sinful to participate in a Nazarite vow, and Paul actually did participate even to the extent of paying for the ritualistic shaving of the heads of those under the vow.

However, it was a contrived deception so did that make Paul's participation sinful?

(straining gnats?)

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The Acts of the Apostles

• 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 9:19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. ESV

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The Acts of the Apostles

So how far do you want to extend this?

What if you pretended to like bowling in order to have an "in" with your bowling friends because you wanted to minister to them?

Is that a sinful deception?

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Exodus 1:15 Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: 16 "When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." 17 But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders. They allowed the boys to live, too. 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives. "Why have you done this?" he demanded. "Why have you allowed the boys to live?" 19 "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women," the midwives replied. "They are more vigorous and have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time." 20 So God was good to the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. NLT

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- Weeks ago I mentioned that this book is a book of transitioning from the old covenant to the new.
- Bear in mind something else I've told you multiple times, that we tend to believe and hold tightly to those doctrines we were first taught.
- This is the primary reason why the early church in Jerusalem still met for awhile on the sabbath and in the synagogues.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- You may also recall that more than a few of the early Jewish converts regarded Christianity as merely a new sect of Judaism.
- After all, Judaism taught to **look for** Messiah and Christianity teaches to **look to** the Messiah who we now know as Jesus.
- The church will come all the way out of Judaism, but it will be sometime until that change is finished – probably a full generation or two.

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**The Acts of the Apostles**

- Acts 21:26 So Paul went to the Temple the next day with the other men. They had already started the purification ritual, so he publicly announced the date when their vows would end and sacrifices would be offered for each of them.
- 27 The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, 28 yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles." 29 (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.) NLT

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**The Acts of the Apostles**

- Because Paul was in the temple and earlier that day Paul was seen with Trophimus, they assumed he took a gentile into the temple.
- This would not be like you and I bringing an unsaved person into the church – we would regard that as a good thing.
- Not so under Judaism and the law - and to make matters worse these Jews under Roman rule had carved out a deal where Jewish law had teeth! (capital punishment)

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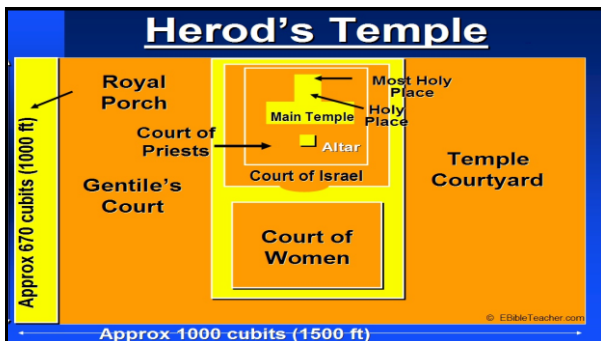
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The Acts of the Apostles

- Remember good ole Demetrius and his mob in Ephesus with that ridiculous two-hour chant of “great is Artemis of the Ephesians”
- When pomp and circumstance is also you got for your hope then evidently you go with it no matter how irrational it may be.
- Do you know what Demetrius and the riot inciters in Jerusalem had in common? (a financial interest in their religion)

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Remember what is going on here – this charge of bringing a gentile into the temple was an unverified allegation.
- The plan of the Jews was to give Paul a fair trial and then hang him. ☺
- The real energy behind the charge is jealousy and an inability to compete with the gospel that Paul was preaching.

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The Acts of the Apostles

When evil men cannot win the argument they almost always resort to violence.

- Jewish Leaders in Acts
- Islam
- The Political Left

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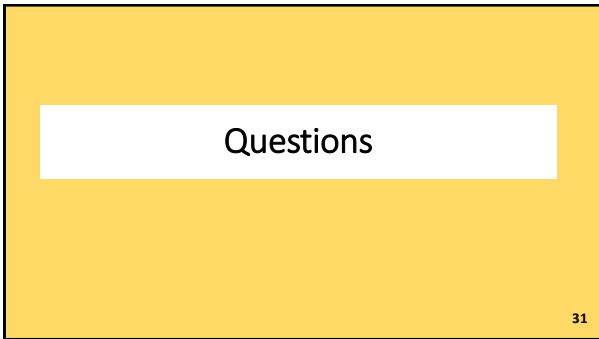
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Questions

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