

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for November 26, 2017

The Return to Jerusalem
Acts 21:1-17

Acts 21:1-17 ends Paul's third missionary journey. Paul planned his return to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21) in order to deliver a monetary gift from the Gentile churches to the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-27). After calling for the Ephesian elders for a final charge (20:18-35), he departed the port town of Miletus for Jerusalem.

1. From Miletus to Tyre (21:1-6)

The pronoun "we" is used throughout Acts 21:1-17, indicating that Luke accompanied Paul on his journey back to Jerusalem. The mention of many places connects to the many people whose lives were touched during the journeys of Paul.

Cos and Rhodes are Greek islands off the coast of modern day Turkey. Paul and Luke changed ships at Patara, which was an ancient harbor along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Phoenicia refers to the region along the eastern Mediterranean of modern day Israel, Lebanon and Syria. The ship sailed past the island of Cyprus, which was the original destination of Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-12). The ship stopped in Tyre for a week to unload cargo, delaying Paul's travel to Jerusalem.

The church in Tyre was established after the persecution of Stephen caused the Greek speaking Jews to flee Jerusalem for Phoenicia (Acts 11:19). God moves people to deliver His truth.

Some scholars consider Paul disobedient to the Spirit for continuing on to Jerusalem. However, it was the people who were telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem in light of the revelation of the prophecy of his suffering (cf. 23:11).

2. From Tyre to Caesarea (21:7-14)

Ptolemais was a seaport about twenty-five miles south of Tyre, halfway to Caesarea.

Agabus (cf. Acts 11:28) used visual prophecy similar to several Old Testament prophets (1 Kings 11:29-31, Isaiah 20:2-4, Jeremiah 13:1-7, Ezekiel 4:1-12). The phrase "This is what the Holy Spirit says" counters the modern notion that New Testament prophecy was of a different type than Old Testament prophecy. Luke recorded these prophecies in order to prove to the reader that Paul's arrest and aftermath were all part of God's plan for his ministry.

Luke was among those who begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

The Lord informed Ananias of Paul's destiny of suffering when Paul first followed Christ (Acts 9:16). The Lord would later affirm Paul's faithfulness in his ministry in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11).

Paul proceeded in spite of their exhortation because the counsel related to his life alone. His view was not that Christians should flee suffering at all cost, but rather that it was a part of the Christian experience (Acts 14:22).

Paul did not regard the prophecy as a prohibition but a warning, similar to Christ's own knowledge of what awaited Him (Luke 9:53, 18:32, 22:42). We all have the opportunity to encounter difficulties in our service to the Lord and only we can decide if our decisions are prudent.

3. From Caesarea to Jerusalem (21:15-17)

Mnason of Cyprus was a part of the church during the days of contention between the Greek and Hebrew believers. This sets up the next challenge to the early church in Acts 21:18-26, the joining of Paul's teaching with Jewish traditions.

May we commit ourselves to serve the Lord in faith, regardless of the difficulties that may lie ahead.