

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

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“Acts 20-21”

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With

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Acts 20-21 describes Paul's last missionary trip before returning to Jerusalem where he was saved by Roman soldiers from rioting Jews who spotted him in the temple. His deliverance would ultimately result in an appeal to Caesar and subsequent journey to Rome. These two chapters include the story of Eutychus, an incident of surprising importance for (again) establishing Paul's apostolic and prophetic credentials. Lastly, Acts 20-21 provide insight into Paul's understanding of how his life was a living fulfillment of the reclaiming of the nations set aside by Yahweh at Babel (Deut. 32:8-9).

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 56, Acts 20-21. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

MSH: Very good. Good to be back. We had a lot of good feedback on the last show, too.

TS: Yeah, doing an interview was definitely fun and changes things up and I'm looking forward to doing more of them.

MSH: Yeah, well, we'll definitely do that again.

TS: Well that sounds good.

MSH: Well let's just jump in here. We got two chapters to cover. As our method is, if you're a newbie, we cover two chapters. We more or less just pick a few things out of each one, at least try to pick out something that's interesting, least interesting to me, hopefully interesting you as we get into the story. Now, these two chapters really are Paul's sort of last go around with a lot of churches, the regions in which he administered. We're going to get a sense very clearly, pretty explicitly in fact, as we go through here that Paul knows that this is the case. He's headed toward Jerusalem so he knows he's never coming back to this region, this area. And we're going to use that to talk about Paul's sense of ministry, what he really thought about his own missionary task, what God wanted him to do. We've talked about that before but there are some things you will really lend themselves to that. So let's jump in here in Acts 20. We'll skip the first few verses. It's more than just a historical itinerary. I want to skip down to verse 7 because this is the beginning of the story of Eutychus, which most Bible readers are going to be familiar with. Verse 7 says,

⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹ And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹ And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

MSH: We'll just stop there. That's verses 7 through 12 in Acts 20. Most people know this story. I've heard it preached in a rather a humorous way. The word here for lad, the young man, *peis* in Greek, that indicates it's likely he was somewhere between 8 and 14 years old so preteen or teenager. So it sort of lends itself to some comic discussion comic relief, that sort of thing. I've never heard it preached, though, for what it really is, the way it really functions. And that is it plays a significant role in telegraphing Paul's apostolic authority. And this is a theme we've seen before in Acts where Luke will write something, either include an event or write something in a certain way so that for the reader or the listener, the alert reader or the listener, will be thinking

about something Paul is doing or saying and will sort of instinctively or intuitively see certain things as mirror imaging of other apostles, namely Peter, and that is designed to cast Paul in the same role, to put Paul in the same status. And you say well, why does Paul need that? Why does Luke need to do that?

Well, think about Paul. Paul began his career as a persecutor, essentially a terrorist, of the early church, and so this is something that Luke probably thinks needs to be done, needs to be reinforced. Paul is a good guy. Look at the great things Paul's doing. He's not only doing great things but he is at the level of an apostle. He is an apostle. He's just like Peter. Peter's not above him. They're colleagues, there parallel figures. So there's Paul's background that needs a little PR, a little help, and then there's also the fact that Paul was not one of the original 12. When we talked about, when we began our study in Acts, how important it was when they replaced Judas, to replace him with someone who had been with the Lord, been in that company for those 3 1/2 years where Jesus was walking around Canaan ministering, how important it was to pick someone who had been among the other, the original 11, but had traveled around and been with Jesus personally, been with him in the flesh so to speak.

Now Paul in his own testimony, in his own conversion experience, and of course, what we read in Luke and elsewhere in Paul's own letters, did have that experience. It was not with the 12 but he encountered the Lord directly and claimed to have been taught directly by Jesus. So in view of that, in view of his sort of outsider status, Johnny-come-lately status, Luke feels the need on occasion, and this is inspired material so the Spirit prompts him to make these sorts of choices to reinforce Paul's apostolic standing, his authority. And this incident, as comical as it might be, it seemed like a throwaway incident, actually serve to do that. And it even ups the ante because it harkens back to certain things in the Old Testament, specifically, some of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament. So this is all designed to elevate Paul's standing as an apostle, to make sure that he's on the equal par with the original 12. So let's just jump into this a little bit.

The last time we saw this was back in Acts 19, so just an episode or so ago. Remember the account in Acts 19 where they encounter some people who Paul deemed needed to be re-baptized so that the Spirit of God would come upon them. This whole idea, this sort of thing happens to connect believers that they encounter with the original Pentecost event so that everyone knows, both the people who were historically on the scene and also the reader, knows that these events, these testimonies, these believers, this is all that the work of the same Spirit. This is all part of the same game plan. So when we're back talking in Acts 19 about this issue, where baptism is associated with the Spirit and Paul re-baptizes people and the Spirit comes, we talked about how the only times that you really see the Spirit mentioned in connection with the act of baptism, it doesn't occur every time somebody is baptized. The only time you specifically see this, these two things put together, are with Peter. Peter, back in Acts chapter 2:38, repent and be baptized, and the Spirit comes.

That's the sermon at Pentecost. Peter in Acts 8, Peter in Acts 10 with Cornelius, this is something that you would associate, this combination, with Peter. Well, when you get to Acts 19, Paul had baptized people before, Acts 16 and 18, but in Acts 19, this is the first time he encounters converts who knew only John's teaching and John's baptism. So when Paul re-baptized them in the name of Jesus and the Spirit comes upon them, it validates their testimony and all these events as being from the same Spirit takes it right back to Acts 2. This is all part of the same program. So that same sort of thing is what happened here in 20 with Eutychus even

though it doesn't concern baptism. So if we go back to verse 7 and look at some of the elements, they meet on the first day of the week.

Now this is likely. Luke is a Gentile. He's likely using the Roman reckoning, sunrise to sunrise. The meeting takes place at night, so Sunday night, the day following the Sabbath. This is actually, curiously, interestingly, the first mention of such a gathering on a Sunday, the day following the Sabbath when they're meeting to break bread apparently to either celebrate communion. We read later, around verse 11 when Paul broke bread and had eaten, might just be only the Lord's Supper there. They may have had only the feast attached to it like we read in 1 Corinthians 11. Associating that practice with Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week, this is the first time we see that. They were meeting at night, so I think the odds are pretty good that they had chosen a night meeting, not just because of scheduling, but also perhaps to commemorate the Last Supper.

That was held in the evening. That would've been something that would've helped people as Paul would put in 1 Corinthians 11, let's do in remembrance of me, the same night on which the Lord was betrayed. It's sort of re-creating the event in that way for the believers gathered there to remember what had happened. So they, takes place at night. One of the things you could miss in passing is where it takes place here in Acts 20. First day of the week, they're gathered together, break bread, Paul talked with them intending to depart. The next day he prolonged his speech until midnight. And then in verse 8 we read, 'there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.' Who cares Luke? Who cares what the place looked like? Who cares how it was decorated?

Well, the mention of the upper room is interesting. Luke uses a pretty rare word in Greek, *hyperōō*. It's a noun. It's a word used only three other times in the New Testament so its frequency is not very much. Guess where the other occurrences are? We get it in Acts 1:13, the disciples were staying in an upper room immediately after Jesus' Ascension, so the same word there. We see in Acts 9:37 and 9:39, twice in the same story. And that's when a disciple named Tabitha, was also known as Dorcas, dies and is laid in an upper room, there's the word, and then Peter visits Tabitha and raises her from the dead, happening in the upper room. So in Acts, this term describes a location where you get faithful believers gathered and where God does spectacular things. God is at work. So there are a number of things you can sort of garner from this.

To the intelligent alert reader of Acts, it's like whoa, that Gentile church in Troas which is where this story of Acts 20 takes place, God was the same guy working there as he was in the upper room back in Acts 1 when this all started. Jesus appeared right there before Pentecost. There's this connection. There's this linguistic, this vocabulary connection between this little Gentile church in Troas that nobody knows about and one of the more significant events in the New Testament. They both happened in this upper room. It also serves to link what happens here, this time with Paul as a vehicle with what Peter had done, raising the dead, the dead girl Tabitha, Dorcas, in the upper room. These are all deliberate things. The Gospels and Acts are very deliberate in what they include and the writers are intelligent about what they're doing and they want readers to, they want to take their minds back to certain things.

I don't want to rabbit trail too much on this but this is why, and I consistently say this and if people don't know me, if it's a new audience or whatnot, I'm out speaking somewhere, I do tend to get the two headed look, like I say, they look at you like you got two heads. But I say look, one of the best things you can do is read your Bible like it's fiction, because when you read

fiction, when you read a novel, you instinctively know, your brain is just triggered as soon as you open it, you instinctively know that the writer is trying to intelligently do things to you. He's using words deliberately. There are scenes you, something happens in a scene and you intuitively know I bet this is going to come back into play somewhere. I'll bet I'll see this scene again. I'll bet I see that character again. I'll bet I'll hear that line again. You just know that the writer's doing something to you intelligently, deliberately, trying to move you down a certain path. That's the way you should read Acts. That's the way should read the Gospels. That's the way should read most the Old Testament, the biblical stories, because they're intelligently put together. It's not random.

They're actually trying to do something. They actually have an agenda. They actually have a place they want to take you mentally so let them do it. Train your mind to do that. Read it like its fiction. Anyway, we go down to verse 10 back in here in Acts 20. Eutychus just falls out of the window, verse 10. Look at the succession of events here. Paul goes down. He bends over him, takes him up in his arms and then says don't be freaked out. His life is in him. The word for life there is *psuche*, which often gets translated as spirit, sometimes as soul. This is the internal life. His life is still in him. His life is in him, not still in him but is in him. So because of the wording here, most scholars feel that this is a genuine resurrection, because the text doesn't say that he was taken up as though he were dead. It says he was taken up dead and Paul says, hey, his life is in him, not still in him, like I'm detecting breathing here, anything like that. Because of the language, this is considered a true resurrection. Because of the sequence and some of the items in the sequence, it harkens back to other resurrection passages in both Testaments, Old and New Testament.

There are elements here that recall things that Jesus had done in Luke 7, with the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter in Luke chapter 8, Lazarus John 11. There are little elements. The closest parallels though are between the resurrection stories of here in Acts 20 with Eutychus and Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings chapter 17 and 2 Kings chapter 4, and of course a close parallel here with what Peter does in Acts chapter 9. So the three closest parallels are Elijah, Elisha, and Peter. Luke is doing this intelligently. The parallel with Elijah and Elisha is especially strong, bending over the body, stretching, the one Elisha I believe is the one that stretches himself over the child, brings him back to life and so on so forth. That has a lot of linguistic parallels in the Septuagint and conceptual parallels back to what Paul is doing here with Eutychus. So what's the effect of this? Let's say you're someone who knows your Bible pretty well. You're an alert reader.

You've been reading the book of Acts, this long letter by Luke. You're going to immediately recognize some clues that take you back into the story of Peter. So right away, we have this Paul Peter parallel going on again. The whole point being Paul's at the same level as Peter. So that messaging is going to be there. But let's also say that you have a decent grasp of your Old Testament, whether you're a Jew who can read it in Hebrew or you're not and you have to read it the Septuagint. You're also going to see hooks, various hooks back into those stories. And so what's the message? Paul is a true prophet. This is what some of the most powerful famous prophets in the Old Testament, they did the same thing. So it elevates Paul's status within the community. He's not an outsider, even though, like Paul describes himself as one born out of due time, outside of when he wishes he was born because he wanted to experience what the 12 experienced when they experienced it. But having been born at the wrong time in his own language, he's still in the same group. This whole idea is important to Luke and to the New

Testament in terms Paul's status. Now we get this story with Eutychus and after that happens, verse 13,

¹³ But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land..

MSH: So we get a little bit of a travel itinerary. Verse 17, we get Miletus mentioned in Ephesus. They call the elders of the church to come and meet Paul. He says to them in verse 18, let's just pick up here. Paul speaking to the elders from the church of Ephesus,

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.

MSH: And he goes on a little bit. They have a tearful goodbye, but you get the distinct sense Paul knows that there is just bad stuff coming down the road. Something wicked this way comes and he just knows that he's going to run into something real serious. But he's going to go. He's going to go anyway. The Spirit has told him, you're going to go up to Jerusalem and suffer. That becomes significant if we think about this. Go back to verse 22. Paul says I'm going to Jerusalem because I'm constrained by the Spirit literally. More literally, it would be bound by the Spirit, which could mean either constrained in his own spirit but more likely means influenced by the Holy Spirit.

In other words, he is convicted, he is certain he is being compelled by the Spirit to go, even though through the course of all these places he's already been, the Spirit has told him when you get there, something bad is going to happen. So now elsewhere, Luke has used similar language to describe what Paul's doing as a missionary. Acts 13:3, also verses 4-9, 16:6-7, Acts 19:21, Paul has followed these prompts. He's followed these compulsions. At other times, the Spirit has forbid him from doing something. He's been obedient. So he's not going to look at this and say well, even though I know something bad is going to happen, I'm going to shrink away. I'm not going to obey. He's not going to do that. He's very clear he's not going to do that. So he is on his way to Jerusalem, compelled by the Spirit to go there. Now let's just go back to verse 22 in Acts 20 and re-read that. He says,

²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.

MSH: Now, how does he know that? We can say he has a good sense of it because he knows something bad is going to happen. But this is something easy to miss. We've actually seen this Spirit constraint idea before with respect to what Paul understands about his own ministry and destiny. He knows he's never going to return these churches because why? We've talked about this before. He believes his path is to get to Rome. He's already said that a couple times. He believes his path is to get to Rome. And if you recall when he's on the way to Rome, he writes about this in the book of Romans, when he's on his way to Rome, he talks about getting to Spain. Why is that significant? He knows, ok, I'm going to go to Jerusalem. I don't know how but that's part of how I'm going to get to Rome. And when he's on his way to Rome, he's like okay, I got to get to Spain. Why does he think this way? It's because he has a firm grasp of his role in God's plan. He is the apostle to the Gentiles. He is the living fulfillment of Isaiah 66. And I remember in earlier episodes I posted an article or two about this. It is significant because Spain is Tarshish.

Spain is Tarshish and Tarshish is the westernmost point of the known world in the Old Testament times, specifically the Table of Nations which are the nations that were produced from the judgment at the Tower of Babel that we read about in Deuteronomy 32:8-9. This is the outworking of the Deuteronomy 32 worldview in Paul's mind, in his consciousness, in his mode of thinking. He knows that when the Most High divided the nations, he divided them up according to the number the sons of God. If you're new to the podcast, you need to go to the podcast website and watch the Divine Council worldview videos in both Testaments to know what I'm talking about here. That's why they're there. Paul's very conscious that he is playing a pivotal role to the nations, to those nations that God had disinherited before he raised up his own portion, Deuteronomy 32:9, Yahweh's own portion is Israel. Paul knows he is the key player in reclaiming that territory, in getting people for the family of God out of all of those nations. And I believe Paul very firmly believed that he would not die until he got to Spain, until he had accomplished that part of his mission, until his journeys made it so that every place in the known world at the time had heard the gospel. This is what Paul is talking about when he talks about the fullness of the Gentiles.

The Lord isn't going to comeback yet. He's only going to come back when the time of the Gentiles has been fulfilled. The fullness of the Gentiles is this thing that's holding the second coming back. What Paul didn't know was the world's a lot bigger than the Mediterranean. God knew that and we have the same language, we have the same issue here. When will God look at the world and say the nations have been reclaimed? Everyone that I want in my family, that I intend to have in my family from the Gentile nations, when is that enough? When it is enough, then we get that language in Romans 9 through 11, then all Israel will be saved. Then we'll go back to the Jew. In popular end times thinking, you don't really hear a lot about this because people are using a newspaper to do their exegesis or hermeneutics. This is what Paul was thinking. Paul wasn't thinking about a 10 nation confederacy or anything like this. He's thinking

about the fullness of the Gentiles. This is the key. This is the trigger. This is the climactic event. He thought he was living that out. He was the guy who was going to do that and then the Lord would come back, very much in his consciousness. Look at what he writes the back in Acts 19:21. It says, 'Now after these events, Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem.'

Remember, we just read Paul says in Acts 20 where we are in verse 22, behold, I'm going to Jerusalem constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what's going to happen to me there except it's going to be bad. Back in Acts 19, we read where Paul says, or Luke writes, Paul resolved the spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem saying, after I've been there, I must also see Rome. He has this sense of course I'm going there. I know it's going to be bad but I have to go because when I go there, then I'm going to get to Rome. I don't know how it's going to work out but I got to get to Rome. Then we read in Romans 15, this is his letter to the Romans. I hope you realize that when Paul writes his letter the Romans, he's never met them. He's never been to Rome. He writes this on the way because in the first two verses, he talks about I can't wait to see you and impart unto you some spiritual gift and all this sort of thing. Again, he's not been there yet.

He's eager to get there so that he can teach them and so and so forth. But here's what he writes in Romans 15:19. He says, 'By the power of signs and wonders, by the power the Spirit of God so that from Jerusalem and all the way around Illyricum, I have fulfilled the Ministry of the gospel of Christ and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel not where Christ has already been named, places I've been, places that the other apostles have been. I don't want to do that lest I build on someone else's foundation. But as it is written, those who have never been told of him will see, and those who've never heard will understand.' He quotes the Old Testament and then he says in verse 22, this Romans 15. 'This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.' Basically I had to go to these other territories because we're moving westward, following the pattern of the Table of Nations. I had to do the job here first. And the Spirit of God knew that. He had to teach me that first. He had to say don't go here, don't go there.

I've been hindered from coming to you but now, since I no longer, this is verse 23 Romans 15, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions and since I have longed for many years to come to you I hope to see you, and catch this. This is a great line. He says to the Romans, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain. And then verse 28, when therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, for the poor back in Jerusalem, I will leave for Spain by way of you. So he tells the Romans, look, I know I'm coming to see you. I can't wait but you're really just a stop along the way to Spain. That's really where we're supposed to go. And he has this consciousness because he knows his Old Testament. In Acts 20, go back to Acts 20 again. Look at what he says in verse 24. We'll read it again. We read it two or three times already. He says, I do not account my life of any value nor is precious to myself if only I may finish my course in the Ministry that I received from the Lord to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

This is just in the forefront of his mind. By the way, I should say when Unseen Realm ships, I'm going to talk about this. When the book is out, you'll be reading about this. Make sure you go the companion website that is associated with the book because there are people, other scholars, who doubt that Paul was understanding the term Tarshish in Genesis 10, the Table of Nations, correctly, because Tarshish is descended from Japheth, the sons of Noah there in the

Table of Nations in Genesis 10. And Japheth's descendants are all associated with Greece. Well, how could it be Spain? How could it be all the way to the west where Spain is now if all the descendants here were from Greece? Well guess what? There's evidence on the companion website that didn't make it into the book where Heroditus and other ancient writers write that Tarshish was under Greek control. By the time that this stuff gets written and the Table of Nations as well, it was under Greek control. So it makes perfect conceptual logical sense. If you run into that in the meantime, don't let that bother you. It just popped into my head now so I thought I'd share it with you.

But going back to Paul, what is in Paul's head is like, look you lucky Romans. I'm going to go to Jerusalem. I'm going to take a beating there. I don't know what's going to happen, but that's so I can go to Rome. And I can't wait to see you guys. But really, I'm not really going to see you guys. God isn't doing all this just to see you. I'm going to see you in passing on my way to Spain. That is the endgame. He thinks this way because of his knowledge of the Old Testament. So let's jump into Acts 21. Paul keeps going and he makes it. He keeps going on his journey and let's just read the first few verses of Acts 21 so we can get that setting.

And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ² And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. ⁵ When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed ⁶ and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

MSH: So the disciples are saying the Spirit of God, we're in touch with the Spirit, too. And you shouldn't go to Jerusalem. Well, it's not a contradiction because they know because the spirit has already told Paul that the bad things are going to happen in Jerusalem. And we're not told exactly how but they're getting that sense, too. And so they're warning Paul, and Paul's like hey, I already know this. The Spirit is revealing to Paul's friends and later to Agabus, the prophet. We'll read in a few minutes in Acts 21 that you go to Jerusalem and something awful is going to happen to you. Don't go. And Paul's like look, I already know this. I've already gotten this information. I get it all the time. Basically everywhere I've gone, the Spirit has told me that I'm going to suffer when I go to Jerusalem, but I need to go there because of all this other stuff. I need to go there because that is the key to getting me to the endpoint, which is Spain. So he doesn't go into all the details with them, but as we just read in the book of Romans he lets them know. This is just what's in Paul's head. So let's just keep reading in Acts 21:7,

⁷ When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. ⁸ On the

next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. ¹⁰ While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

¹⁵ After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

MSH: We'll stop there for a second. Couple things here, Philip's daughters, that's included in Luke's narrative in Acts 21:7-9. Female prophets, Philips daughters who prophesied, female prophets were not unknown in the Old Testament. We get a few of those, Huldah, if you want to count Deborah. I think it is fair to count there. She was an oracle as well as being a judge. We get this in the Old Testament but female prophets were expected by the events of Pentecost. And they pop up in Acts and the Epistles Remember back in Peter sermon when he quotes Joel 2, he says, Joel says the Spirit will be poured out on men and women. This is not unexpected. So if you go back and look at some of these references, I just alluded to Acts chapter 2 there, when he quotes Joel. I'll just read it for you.

¹⁷ "And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

MSH: It couldn't be any clearer. You get Luke 2:36, Luke's own gospel that he had written earlier.

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,

MSH: So an allusion to Anna, a prophetess. 1 Corinthians 11:5, one of Paul's Epistles, 'every wife or woman', depending on your translation, 'who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her own head.' It's just a reference to female prophecy so this is not unusual in either Testament. If you're going back to Acts chapter 2, this just sort of goes with the turf, the pouring

out of the Spirit. Let's go back to chapter 21:17 and following. That's where we left off. Let's just read some of what, well, I'm going to skim a little bit here.

¹⁷ When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed.

MSH: So let's just stop there. Paul goes in. He's meeting with James and the elders of the Jerusalem church. This is like the original church. We've seen this church has the highest status even though it's probably the poorest because Paul's been collecting money for them through his travels. He gives them an update and James and the elders are like, this is awesome. But then look at what they say to Paul. They say, 'you see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed.' We read that early in Acts where a few thousand on certain occasions had gotten saved. Well that hadn't stopped. There are thousands and thousands of converts among the Jews in the Jerusalem church. These are Jewish believers and James continues in verse 20.

²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, ²¹ and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. ²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. ²⁵ But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality."

²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.

²⁷ When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,

MSH: Of course we know the rest of the story. It starts a riot and Paul has to be saved by the Roman guards, the Roman soldiers there. He has to be taken away from the mob who were beating him and certainly going to kill him because they're thinking that this guy hates Judaism, hates the law, hates Moses. And he's doing things to circumvent it, to corrupt it. That isn't the case at all. So look at the situation. You go back to what James said. The Jewish population, the Jerusalem church, is significant. Acts 2-6 we get thousands of Jews responding to the gospel. James says there we've got thousands of among the Jews who believe. The Jewish believers have been told that Paul teaches Jews living among the Gentiles to just ditch Moses, ditch the law, don't worry about circumcision, don't observe any of the customs, the vessels. And Paul isn't doing any of that.

This is the language of apostasy. Paul's is portrayed as an apostate which is really not a good thing and James knows it. So he's like we got to do something here. The issue here in this narrative isn't what Gentiles do because Acts 15 settled that, and James brings that up. Luke inserts that here into the narrative to make sure that everybody understands that. We're not talking about what Gentiles do. The question is what Jews should do and these Jews who believed in the gospel have been told that Paul hates the law. And they just view that as apostasy. It's not that they are not clear about the gospel. It's that what goes on in the Jerusalem church, we don't do that here. We observe vows. We observe feast days. We circumcise our kids. Who is this lunatic Paul running around all over the world in the other nations when he meets Jews telling them not to do this stuff?

That's just horrible. And that isn't what Paul is doing. If we can go back and look at what Paul actually does do, in 1 Corinthians 7:18, Paul teaches Jews not to undo their circumcision although in verse 19 of the same chapter, he notes that circumcision really doesn't have anything to do with salvation, says the same thing in Galatians 6:15. When Paul talks about the law he downplays the law and instead, he deals with soteriology. He deals with salvation. Basically the law was a good thing but it's useless if you don't have Jesus. It's useless if you don't have Christ. It's useless if you don't have salvation. If you don't believe Jesus is the Messiah, you can keep the law all day long. It's not going to do anything for you. If you do know Christ as Messiah, if you're a Jew then do those things.

But understand that they don't have anything to do with salvation. If this draws you closer to God, fine. Gentiles don't need to do this. We're not going to turn them into Jews. That goes back to the Acts 15 issue. So Paul doesn't diss the law. He just has his doctrine of salvation correct is what it really comes down to. We know Paul was sensitive to this. He has Timothy circumcised. We read that in a previous episode. But he's sensitive to the situation but he's also very clear and uncompromising on what the gospel is and isn't. But he's being slandered here in the Jerusalem church. And James comes up with this idea and it was a good idea and it worked until the Jews from Asia showed up just right as the whole thing was about to end. Did this take Paul by surprise, meaning he knew bad things were going to happen? Well, yes he did. He didn't know the specific circumstances and he actually takes the occasion as we're going to see next time when we get into Acts 22, he takes the occasion to do what? Remember when he's being carried away from the mob, he says the Roman soldier, hey, let me talk to the crowd. He's going to preach to them.

He's going to do what he does everywhere else. He's going to make sure that everyone knows why he is there, who he is, and what he really teaches and what they need to hear. I don't really want to rabbit trail into what the vow was. There are three or four different options for

this. We talked about this before when Paul himself had his own vow, but in case it was probably something related to maybe a Thanksgiving offering to the Lord, telling him he wasn't going to be hurt in Corinth and things like that. Here, because of the shaving the head, it might be Nazarite vow, and that might apply to what Paul said earlier. That's one option. Others think it has something more to do with a personal issue, maybe a point of uncleanness. We don't know why these four guys, James says these four guys who are already under a vow here, we really don't know what their circumstances, maybe it's Nazarite, maybe it's some other point of ritual uncleanness.

We're not really told but he says, Paul, going with them, paying for their vows so that everybody knows that you're happy they're doing this and it's at your expense. Go in there and do what needs to be done with them so that people know that you're not out there just dissing the law. It's important for Jewish believers to know that. It almost works except for when the Jews of Asia show up. So we're familiar with the story and I think when we meet next time, we're going to save the rest of this for next time, but he beckons to the Tribune and says, hey, can I speak to the crowd, and that's what he does. And so we'll pick up with that next time. And if you recall an earlier podcast episode, I think it was when we talked about Acts 14. Acts 14 is the chapter where Paul alludes to something happening 14 years ago in his life. That's going to factor in here in Acts 22. It also factors into 2 Corinthian's 12 when Paul has this vision of the divine realms. If you remember back when Paul was stoned we were in Acts 14, wondering about whether he had a near-death experience and what that was. I made the comment at the end of that episode that probably the best option is what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 12. This vision he has goes back to a vision he has or he alludes to here in Acts 22. So next time, we'll get into what Paul says to the crowd. We'll get into this issue of this vision he had Acts 22 and we'll backtrack to some of those things and just sort of round out the pictures there.