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Paul Went on to Jerusalem Despite Warnings 21: 1-16

57 AD

Paul went on to Jerusalem despite warnings DIG: How might Paul be interpreting these warnings differently than his friends do in verses 4 and 10-13 (see 20:22-23)? Why does he not listen to their advice? How are Paul's companions faring on this trip? Are you impressed with Paul's courage? Or do you think he was foolish? Why? For Paul it's "Jerusalem or Bust!" How does that compare with Yeshua's determination in Luke 13:31-33?

REFLECT: In your eyes, did Paul make the right decision to go to Jerusalem, even though godly people through the Spirit urged him not to go? Why or why not? When have you made decisions against the wishes of people you admired and trusted? What happened? In retrospect, was your decision a wise one? Explain? What has been your most recent, most serious struggle with God? What do you suspect would happen if you totally submitted to His will and way? Is that what's holding you back? How so?

The first stage of the journey: After tearing ourselves away from the Ephesian elders we set sail (to see link click [Cj](#) - Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders). This officially ended **the Third Missionary Journey**. **We** (see [Bx](#) - Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia: A closer look at the "us" or "we" passages and sea passages) set a straight course on the first **ship** to the small island of **Cos** forty miles due south of Miletus.

The next day we sailed **to Rhodes**, a larger island southeast of **Cos**, and from there to **Patara**, a seaport of Lycia on the south coast of Asia Minor. Because the first **ship** made so many stops, the traveling missionaries sought out a **ship** going directly **across to Phoenicia** hoping to save time. **Finding** a much larger **ship**, **we went aboard and set sail**. **Their** route took them southeast into the middle of the Eastern Mediterranean. **When we came in sight of Cyprus, passing it by on the left, we kept sailing** on the approximately 400 mile trip **to** the province of **Syria** (that included Isra'el). **We landed at**

Tyre, which was the port of entry into the province of **Syria**. But to **their** dismay, **the ship** docked in **Tyre** for **seven days to unload the cargo (21:1-3)**. Have you ever noticed how often **ADONAI** has a blessing on the unscheduled stops along your way? **God** had a blessing waiting for **Paul** and the others on **their** unscheduled stop.⁴⁸⁷

We looked up the disciples and we stayed there seven days strengthening the **believers**. There had been **believers** in **Tyre** as early as **11:19** as a result of the Dispersion after the stoning of **Stephen (11:19)**. **They kept telling Paul through the Ruach not to set foot in Jerusalem (21:4)**. Some believe that **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** forbid **Paul** to go to **Jerusalem**, but the text doesn't say that. **Through the Ruach** in this context means that **the Ruach's** message concerned what would happen to **Paul** when **he set foot in Jerusalem**. So **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** did not forbid **Paul** to go to **Jerusalem**, it was the **believers** in **Tyre** who were encouraging **Paul** not to go. **They loved him** and were afraid for **his** safety. Yet **Paul** had to go (**19:21, 20:22: 21:14**).⁴⁸⁸ Furthermore, nowhere in the Scriptures does it suggest that **Paul** sinned by **going to Jerusalem**. After **he** got there **he** declared: **I have lived my life in all good conscience for God up to this day (23:1)**. It would be difficult to see how **he** could have said that if **he** had just deliberately sinned against **ADONAI**.

When **our** days there were completed, **we** departed and went on our journey. **They all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were clear outside the city**. This was similar to **Paul's** experience with **the Ephesian elders at Miletus (20:38)**. **After kneeling down on the shore and praying, we said farewell to one another**. The reference to **prayer** is not incidental. Everyone was fully aware of the danger facing **Paul** in **Jerusalem**. Then **Paul and Luke** boarded the same **ship** that brought **them** to **Tyre**, and the **believers of Tyre** returned home again (**21:5-6**).

The second stage of the Journey: When we had finished the trip from **Tyre**, we arrived at **Ptolemais**. Known in **Judges 1:31** as **Acco**, **Ptolemais** was about 25 miles south of **Tyre**. Never one to miss a ministry opportunity (**Ephesians 5:16**), **Paul** immediately sought out the **believers** in that city. **After greeting the brothers and sisters, Paul and his companions and stayed with them for one day**, perhaps again being tied to **his ship's** schedule (**21:7**). The church at **Ptolemais**, like that of **Tyre**, had likely been founded by those who fled **Jerusalem** following **Stephen's** martyrdom (**11:19**). **Paul's** care for **them** was no less because **he** had not founded **their** church; **his** was a concern for all the churches (**Second Corinthians 11:28**).⁴⁸⁹



And the third stage of the journey: On the next day, we departed and came to Caesarea Maritima, thirty miles south of Ptolemais. It was a major harbor city, a Roman city and the official residence of the procurator, where Pontius Pilate lived and where Felix and Festus lived in the book of Acts. We entered the home of Philip, the proclaimer of Good News (see [Az - The Good News Spreads to Samaria](#)), who was one of the seven deacons, and we stayed with him. Indeed **Philip** may have been one of **Luke's** sources when started gathering information about the early Messianic community in **Jerusalem**. Now this man had **four virgin daughters who prophesied (21:8-9)**. **Luke** presents **five cameos** of important believing women in a variety of roles they assumed (see [Bd - Signs and Miracles Follow Peter: A closer look at Luke, Women and Ministry](#)). Perhaps it was then when **Philip** revealed the facts about **himself** and **Stephen**, which **Luke** later incorporated into **Acts 6-8**.

Prophets and prophetesses, like emissaries, were specially appointed by **God** in the church. **They** were distinguished from individual **believers**. **They** complemented the ministry of the emissaries (**Ephesians 4:11**), functioning exclusively with a particular local congregation, while the emissaries had a broader ministry. In contrast to the emissaries, whose doctrinal revelation was foundational to the church (**Acts 2:42; Eph 2:20**), the message of **the prophets** was more personal and practical. **They** sometimes received new revelation from **ADONAI** concerning matters that would later be covered in Scripture. The main thrust of **their** ministry, however, was the confirming or explanation of existing divine revelation, much like today's preachers and teachers of the Word (see the commentary on [First Corinthians DI - The Word that Builds Up](#)).

The revelatory aspect of **the gift of prophecy** ceased at the close of the ear of the emissaries with the completing of Scripture. The non-revelatory aspect of **the prophets'**

ministry of doctrinal and practical encouragement has been taken over by the evangelists, pastors and teachers. In fact, the last letters **Paul** wrote, the pastoral letters, **he** does not refer to **prophets** at all; instead, teaching was to be done by **the elders (First Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)**.⁴⁹⁰ These **four prophetesses** had the gift of **prophecy (First Corinthians 11:5)**; however, **they** could not use the gift during public worship (**First Corinthians 14:33-35**). The place **they** used this gift was in **their home** as **verse 8** makes clear. During **their** stay, another **prophecy** of great interest was given.

While we stayed there for a number of days, a prophet who had received direct revelation from **God named Agabus (11:27ff), came down from Judea. He** was a trustworthy **prophet** because **he** had already been authenticated by a previous prophecy **he** made in **11:27-18**. But here **Agabus** gave another **prophecy. He came to us**, and performed a symbolic act like **prophets** in the TaNaKh did (**First Kings 11:29ff; Isaiah 20:3ff; Ezekiel 4:1ff**). **He took a long piece of cloth that Paul used as a belt, tied his own hands and feet, and** then explained the significance of **his** actions: **The Ruach ha-Kodesh says this: "In this way shall the unsaved Jewish people in Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (21:10-11)**. It would take many years to get out of those hands. Here **Agabus** was merely confirming what **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** had **said** earlier, **that bondage and afflictions awaited Paul in Jerusalem (20:22)**. Nevertheless, **his bondage and afflictions** gave **him** the opportunity to witness to mobs, to kings, to **Jews**, to the Great Sanhedrin and to Gentiles.

The scene that followed was emotional. **When we heard these things, both we and the local people urged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Their** love and concern for **Paul** caused **them**, in view of **his** inevitable capture, to try to dissuade **him** from risking **his** life. **Then Paul responded, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? The prophecy from Agabus was divine, while the urging was merely human. For I am ready not only to be bound but to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Yeshua!" Since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, saying only, "May the Lord's will be done" (21:12-14)**. This was not a fatalistic resignation, but a confident trust in **God's** sovereign and perfect **will (First Samuel 3:18; Matthew 6:10; Luke 22:42)**.

Then came the fourth stage of the journey: After several days spent in Caesarea, we packed our bags and started going up to Jerusalem 50 or 60 miles away depending on which route **they** chose. A rough calculation of the trip from **Philippi** to **Caesarea** meant that **Paul** arrived on the coast of **Isra'el** about two weeks before the Festival of **Shavu'ot**. **Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us, bringing us to Mnason of Cyprus - one of the early disciples by whom we might be hosted (21:15-16)**. Thus,

after many weeks of travel and suspense, and in spite of dire warnings, **Paul** reached **his** destination. It would be an exaggeration to call this **Paul's** "triumphal entry" into **Jerusalem**. But at least **his** warm reception strengthened **him** to bear the mob's shouts of, "**Away with him**" (21:36), a few days later.⁴⁹¹

In fact, it is hard to resist the conclusion that **Luke** sees a parallel between **Jesus'** journey to **Jerusalem**, which is prominent in **his** gospel, and **Paul's** journey to **Jerusalem**, which **he** describes in **Acts**. Of course the resemblance is far from being exact, and the mission of **Jesus** was unique; yet the correspondence between the two journeys seems too close to be a coincidence. First, like **Jesus**, **Paul** traveled to **Jerusalem** with a group of **His disciples** (**Luke 10:38** and **Acts 20:4ff**). Secondly, like **Jesus**, **he** was opposed by hostile **Jews** who plotted against **his** life (**Luke 6:7** and **11, 11:53:54, 22:1-2** and **Acts 20:3** and **19**). Thirdly, like **Jesus**, **Paul** made or received three successive predictions of **his** sufferings (**Luke 9:22** and **44, 18:31-32** and **Acts 20:22-23, 21:4** and **11**), including **his** being handed over to the Gentiles (**Luke 18:32** and **Acts 21:11**) Fourthly, like **Jesus**, **Paul** declared **his** readiness to lay down **his** life (**Luke 12:50, 22:19, 23:46** and **Acts 20:24, 21:13**). Fifthly, like **Jesus**, **Paul** was determined to complete **his** ministry and not be deterred from it (**Luke 9:51** and **Acts 20:24, 21:13**). Sixthly, like **Jesus**, **Paul** expressed **his** surrender to the will of God (**Luke 22:42** and **Acts 21:14**). Even if some of these details cannot be pressed, **Luke** surely intends **his** readers to envision **Paul** as following in **his Master's** footsteps when **he was determined to go up to Jerusalem** (**Luke 9:51**).⁴⁹²

Paul's Third Missionary Journey was complete, having begun after a visit to the Messianic community in **the Holy City (18:22)** and now ending there. **His** Greek mission was also complete. **He** would not return to the churches he had started. **Luke** had prepared **his** readers well for this reality. **Paul** had made the fact clear in **his** address to **the Ephesian elders (20:25)**. **Paul's** own forebodings (**20:22ff**), and those of **the believers** at **Tyre** and **Caesarea** have prepared us for the events that are about to unfold in **Jerusalem**. **Paul** would no longer bear witness as a free man in the rest of **Acts**. **He** would be in chains, but the chains would be unable to bind **his** witness. **His** witness would indeed become bolder still.⁴³⁷

You have made the contrast clear, Lord. Those whose lives are according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those whose lives are according to the Spirit, set their minds on things of the Spirit. For the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and shalom. For the mindset of the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not submit itself to the law of God - for it cannot. We, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since Your Spirit lives in us



(Romans 8:5, 7-9a). *May I want only what **You** know is best. May I not only let **You** have **Your** way with me but consider it a joy to follow **You**.*⁴⁹⁴