

ACTS

Chapter 21

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

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. 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.

21:1–4 At first, Paul and his companions sailed on a smaller ship that hugged the coast. At Patara, they boarded a larger vessel that could make the 400-mi trip across open water to Tyre. (TLSB)

21:1 *we.* The "we" section resumes from 20:15. (TLSB)

by a straight course to Cos. Favorable winds took them to a stopping place for the night at this island. (CSB)

Rhodes. The leading city on the island of Rhodes, once noted for its harbor colossus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (but demolished over two centuries before Paul arrived there). It took them a day to get to Rhodes. (CSB)

Patara. On the southern coast of Lycia. Paul changed ships from a vessel that hugged the shore of Asia Minor to one going directly to Tyre and Phoenicia. (CSB)

21:3 *Cyprus.* See 13:4. (CSB)

Tyre. Paul had passed through this Phoenician area at least once before (15:3; cf. Mk 7:24). (CSB)

21:4 *sought out the disciples.* The Gospel first came to Phoenicia after Stephen's martyrdom (11:19). (TLSB)

seven days. These, added to the 29 days since the Passover in Philippi, would leave only two weeks until Pentecost. (CSB)

through the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave some of these fellow Christians a vision or revelation about Paul. Cf 13:2. (TLSB)

telling Paul not to go. The Spirit warned of the coming trials in store for Paul at Jerusalem. Because of these warnings, Paul's brothers urged him not to go on, knowing that trials lay ahead. But Paul felt "compelled by the Spirit" to go (20:22). (CSB)

This message was in accord with what Paul had told the Ephesian elders—trouble awaited him in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

The Spirit was compelling Paul to go. The Spirit had warned Paul that prison and hardships awaited him. The Spirit also informed the disciples at Tyre of what the apostle faced. On the basis of that information they gave Paul mistaken advice, to stay away from Jerusalem. They drew false conclusion from true information, just as people sometimes make false application of God's written word. They meant well, but Paul could not bow to their urging. (PBC)

Both prophetic messages and human advice play important roles in this conflict, and the narrative reveals some of the difficulties in using either to determine God's will for human life. – This is an interesting case of conflict in understanding the Spirit's directions. The conflict can, of course, be reduced to the human level. The more extensive statements of the Spirit's revelations in 20:23 and 21:11 simply indicate what will happen to Paul if he goes to Jerusalem. The message in 21:4 goes further, drawing the conclusion that Paul should not leave from Jerusalem. Perhaps the Spirit's message is consistent, but the prophets in Tyre have mixed their own conclusion with the Spirit's message. The use of indirect discourse in 21:4 removes the message a step from the Spirit's direct expression. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the narrator has allowed to surface at least a superficial contradiction in the divine guidance that Paul is receiving, an indication that it is seldom easy to separate divine revelation from human interpretation. Appeal to divine guidance is not an easy escape from the ambiguities of human life. (Tannehill)

21:7 *Ptolemais.* The modern city of Acco, north of and across the bay from Mount Carmel. It was one day's journey from Tyre on the north and another 35 miles to Caesarea on the south. (CSB)

21:8 *Caesarea.* A Gentile city, the capital of Roman Judea (see note on 10:1). (CSB)

Philip the evangelist. Philip's evangelistic work may have focused on Caesarea for almost 25 years. "Evangelist" is a title used only here and in Eph 4:11; 2Ti 4:5. (CSB)

Last mentioned in 8:40, after his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch. He is called "the evangelist" only here, perhaps meaning that he spread the Gospel well. (TLSB)

Almost twenty-five years before, after the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip "appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea"

(8:40). He was still there, exercising his special gift of telling the good news. His daughters were also gifted. Recall the prophecy of Joel, which Peter quoted on Pentecost: “Yours sons and daughters will prophecy” (2:17; Joel 2:28). The Messiah had come. God had poured out his Spirit. Philip’s daughters had the gift of being able to explain and apply God’s word. (PBC)

one of the seven. Chosen to assist in the distribution of food in the early days of the Church in Jerusalem (6:1–6). (TLSB)

21:9 *unmarried daughters.* They may have been dedicated in a special way to serving the Lord. (CSB)

prophesied. See 1Co 11:5; 12:8–10; cf. Lk 2:36. For OT prophetesses see Ex 15:20; Jdg 4:4; 2Ki 22:14; Ne 6:14. (CSB)

21:10 *prophet named Agabus.* Evidently he held the office of prophet, as Philip held the office of evangelist (v. 8). This is the same prophet who had been in Antioch prophesying the coming famine in Jerusalem some 15 years earlier (11:27–29). (CSB)

21:11 *Paul’s belt* – The kind of belt Paul would have worn was a long piece of cloth wrapped around his waist. It could be used for hitching up one’s loose outer garment in order to walk or to work. It could also serve as a pocket when it was properly folded and tightened. (PBC)

Similar to prophets of the OT, Agabus was directed by the Spirit to use this object lesson to foretell Paul’s future (cf Is 20:2–3; Ezk 4:1). (TLSB)

Thus says the Holy Spirit. Formula common to OT prophets (cf Am 3:11; Na 1:12), clearly indicating this message was from God. (TLSB)

bind ... deliver. Wording is similar to descriptions of Jesus’ arrest and trial (Lk 18:32; Mt 27:2). As at the trial of Jesus, Gentile authorities consistently find no fault with Paul (Ac 23:29; 25:25; 26:31). (TLSB)

21:12 *we and the peopl.* Now Luke, in the company of travelers with Paul, joins in urging Paul not to go to Jerusalem. (CSB)

21:13 *breaking my heart* – Their weeping is an emotional reinforcement of their appeal, and Paul must reproach them. The affection of friends who do not understand his decision greatly increases Paul’s difficulty in holding to his purpose, and he seeks to end their appeal with an unequivocal statement of his resolve. (Tannehill)

Paul gently rebukes the others for trying to dissuade him from his goal of going to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

imprisoned but even to die. Even though Agabus’s prophecy did not predict Paul’s death, Paul states his willingness to die for the sake of Christ (cf Lk 9:23–24). (TLSB)

21:14 *will of the Lord be done.* May mean that they finally recognized that it was the Lord’s will for Paul to go to Jerusalem. (CSB)

Those with Paul recognized not only Paul’s resolve but also the divine hand behind upcoming events (cf Lk 22:42). (TLSB)

Paul does insist, which suggests that he has a very powerful reason for going to Jerusalem. This reason, however, remains obscure. The lack of an obvious human reason for going to Jerusalem makes the sense of divine purpose all the stronger. Nevertheless, there are a few hints in the narrative of how Paul's final journey to Jerusalem fits with his basic mission. In his farewell speech Paul said that he was willing to risk his life in order to "complete my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of the grace of God" (20:24). The journey to Jerusalem is necessary to complete the ministry to which he has been called. Because Paul goes to Jerusalem aware of what will befall him there, his arrest and trials are not an unexpected interruption of his plans but a part of what he must face to complete his ministry. (Tannehill)

Thus the completion of Paul's ministry apparently requires the extensive defense of his work against religious and political accusations that actually follows in the narrative. Paul is facing the cultural consequences of his previous ministry, which have disturbed religion and society, with their guardians, by introducing a new understanding of God's work as reaching out through Jesus Messiah to both Jew and Gentile, breaking down the barrier between them. The mounting accusations that Paul has "upset the world" (17:6; cf 16:20-21; 18:13; 19:25-27) now come to a climax. The world discovers that the challenge is really serious when it learns that the ministers of the new gospel are willing to face the consequences of their own disturbing words. (Tannehill)

Paul's decision to go to Jerusalem and to Rome is a decision to face this crisis. Jerusalem and Rome are the centers of the two powers that Paul has disturbed and to whom he must give a reckoning. He heads for the centers of power, where he will defend his ministry and carry his witness to the high authorities who embody that power. Paul is controlled by a larger purpose. Whether he is fully conscious of this or not, he goes to do what he will in fact do: defend his ministry before angry Jews and confused Romans and carry his witness to the centers of power. In doing so, Paul is also seeking a way for the gospel to move forward in spite of the opposition it has caused. (Tannehill)

21:16 *disciples from Caesarea.* Assisted with the c 55-mi trip to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Mnason. Must have been a disciple of some means to be able to accommodate Paul and a group of about nine men traveling with him. (CSB)

An early convert in the Jerusalem Church. (TLSB)

Seems to have been a man of means. At least he was a generous man, known to be hospitable, for the disciples from Caesarea knew that Paul's part of nine men was to stay at this man's house. (PBC)

21:1–16 Paul completes his journey to Jerusalem despite warnings about the dangers he will encounter there. Many times, due to fear or a lack of understanding, we fail to do the Lord's will. Contrary to all human logic, God's plan of salvation was carried out through Christ for the forgiveness of all our failures. This shows us that God can make all things—however fearful or illogical they may seem to us—work out for our good. We are always on His heart. • Heavenly Father, grant me a portion of Your wisdom as I strive to carry out Your will in my life. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul Visits James

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. 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.

21:17 *had come to Jerusalem.* No more than a day or two before Pentecost. (CSB)

the brothers received us gladly. May indicate the grateful reception of the offering as well. (CSB)

The Christians at Jerusalem were happy to see Paul and his companions, allaying any concerns Paul may have had (cf Rm 15:31). (TLSB)

21:18 *James.* The brother of the Lord, author of the letter of James and leader of the church in Jerusalem (see Gal 1:19; 2:9). He is called an apostle but was not one of the Twelve. (CSB)

21:19 *related one by one* – A detailed report of the work among the Gentiles would include an account of how and why the collection was gathered. That, too, was something that God had accomplished and for which he had received the credit. Paul's ministry was the instrument, but all the achievements were God's. (PBC)

Summary statement of the wondrous works God did through Paul's ministry. Paul made other such reports (cf 15:3–4, 12). (TLSB)

21:20 *they glorified God* – The way “praised” is used in the original language suggests that a service of thanksgiving was held. (PBC)

The Church leaders praised God for working so powerfully through Paul, and likely also for the offering Paul had collected and brought. (TLSB)

many thousands there are among the Jews – There were thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of Jews in the homeland who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and their Redeemer. (PBC)

zealous for the law – As far as the Jewish believers' style of living was concerned, they continued to observe the rules and ceremonies of the law of Moses. (PBC)

The Jewish Christians continued to abide by many of the OT ceremonial laws regarding food, circumcision, the Sabbath, etc. (TLSB)

The term suggests not only “zeal” for observance, but also “jealousy” for the honor to be paid to Torah, and therefore hostility toward any perceived derogation of that honor. Paul refers to himself in Gal. 1:14 as being zealous for the traditions of his ancestors. (Sacra)

21:21 Most likely, Jewish converts from the areas in which Paul had spread the Gospel had innocently reported that they were no longer compelled to observe all the OT ceremonial laws. (TLSB)

they have been told – The Judaizers again were carrying on their campaign against Paul, this time charging that in his mission work the apostle was telling not only Gentiles but also Jews to “turn away from Moses” and refrain from circumcising their children. The charge was false. (LL)

What Paul did teach was the circumcision and living according to the ceremonial law are not necessary for salvation. (PBC)

forsake Moses. The reports of the Jewish converts had been distorted, making it sound as if Paul were advocating a complete break from the Law of Moses (cf 6:13–14). (TLSB)

our customs. Circumcision as well as any of the other OT ceremonial laws. (TLSB)

21:23 *who are under a vow.* They were evidently under the temporary Nazirite vow and became unclean before the completion time of the vow (perhaps from contact with a dead body); cf. Nu 6:2–12. (CSB)

For various reasons, the Jews periodically put themselves under a vow (cf Nu 6:1–21). “We are not to swear in support of evil, that is, to support falsehood, or to swear when there is no need or use. But we should swear for the support of good and the advantage of our neighbor. For such swearing is truly a good work, by which God is praised, truth and right are established, falsehood is refuted, peace is made among men, obedience is rendered, and quarrels are settled” (LC I 66). (TLSB)

Such a vow might be made as a gesture of thanksgiving or in connection with a promise to do some special service to God and man. (PBC)

21:24 *purify yourself.* In some instances the rites included the offering of sacrifices. Such rites were observed by choice by some Jewish Christians but were not required of Christians, whether Jew or Gentile. (CSB)

By participating in the rites of these four men, Paul could demonstrate that he was not urging people to forsake their Jewish heritage. (PBC)

purify yourself ... pay their expenses. Paul is to purge himself of the suspicion that he has become a traitor to the Jewish people and their customs by publicly associating himself with these men and paying the considerable expenses involved in the sacrificial ceremony of purification. (TLSB)

pay their expenses. Paul's part in sponsoring these men would include (1) paying part or all of the expenses of the sacrificial victims (in this case eight pigeons and four lambs, Nu 6:9–12) and (2) going to the temple to notify the priest when their days of purification would be fulfilled so the priests would be prepared to sacrifice their offerings (v. 26). (CSB)

shave their heads. Done at the fulfillment of a vow (Nu 6:18–19). (TLSB)

live in obedience to the law. Paul had earlier taken a vow himself (18:18), he had been a Jew to the Jews (see 1Co 9:20–21), and Timothy had been circumcised (16:3). However, Paul was very careful not to sacrifice Christian principle in any act of obedience to the law (he would not have Titus circumcised, Gal 2:3). (CSB)

Paul's participation would refute the false charges made against him. (TLSB)

For the gospel's sake and to avoid anything that would spoil the church's unity, Paul complied. It was an act of loving concern, and it was in keeping with the policy Paul had followed in all his work. For Paul to assist the four men with their purification rites was in no way to be understood as in conflict with the decision made in 15:20. (PBC)

21:25 *letter with our judgment.* The principles outlined by the Jerusalem Council agree with the suggestion of James and the elders. (TLSB)

21:26 *went into the temple, giving notice.* Apparently Paul was required to inform the appropriate priests when these offerings would be presented. (TLSB)

offering. If the men were under the Nazirite vow, the offering required is detailed in Nu 6:14–15, 18. (TLSB)

21:17–26 The Church at Jerusalem rejoices at what God has done through Paul. The leaders ask him to dispel rumors among Jewish Christians about his ministry by taking part in an OT purification ceremony. Today, we are often tempted to judge fellow Christians on the basis of things not specifically directed in God's Word. Jesus, by His life, death, and resurrection, forgives our sins, including those of judging others. He is our peace. • Praise be to You, Jesus, for setting us free from sin and death! Thank You for allowing us to live in freedom. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul Arrested in the Temple

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, **28** crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." **29** For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. **30** Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. **31** And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. **32** He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. **33** Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. **34** Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. **35** And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, **36** for the mob of the people followed, crying out, "Away with him!"

21:27 *seven days*. Cf. Nu 6:9. These were the days required for purification, shaving their heads at the altar, the sacrifice of a sin offering and burnt offering for each, and announcing the completion to the priests. (CSB)

Jews from of Asia. Paul had suffered already from the hands of Asian Jews (20:19). (CSB)

From Ephesus or some of the other cities of that province. They had been his bitter enemies in the mission field, and they were infuriated to see him in Jerusalem. (PBC)

Jews in Jerusalem for the great pilgrimage feast such as Pentecost. (Sacra)

stirred up the whole crowd – The volatility of the great crowds at the pilgrimage feasts, where a perceived slight against the ancestral customs could quickly generate a riot that required suppression by the military authorities. (Sacra)

Paul’s break with the synagogue at Ephesus and his subsequent missionary success (19:9–10) had made the Jews from Asia esp bitter toward him (cf 20:19). They were present in Jerusalem for Pentecost (cf 20:16). (TLSB)

21:28 They accused Paul of speaking against God’s people (the Jews), against the OT (cf v 21), and against the temple. The last charge was most serious (cf Mk 14:57–58). (TLSB)

brought Greeks into the temple. Explicitly forbidden according to inscribed stone markers (still in existence). Any Gentiles found within the bounds of the court of Israel would be killed. But there is no evidence that Paul had brought anyone other than Jews into the area. (CSB)

Cf v 29. Gentiles could enter the outer court of the temple. Notices were posted in Gk and Lat at the entrance to the inner courts, barring Gentiles from entering. Doing so was punishable by death. (TLSB)

The temple area had a court of the Gentiles, but for Gentiles to go beyond a stone barrier in the temple area was an offense punishable by death. (PBC)

Marking off an inner enclosure in the temple were 13 stone slabs that bore the following inscription in Hebrew and Greek: “Let no Gentile enter within the balustrade (a rail and the row of posts that support it) and enclosure surrounding the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will be personally responsible for his consequent death.” (LL)

21:29 *Trophimus*. Paul probably did not take him into the forbidden area. If he had, they should have attacked Trophimus rather than Paul. (CSB)

One of Paul’s companions on this journey to Jerusalem; he would have been known to the Jews from Ephesus. (TLSB)

Was one of the group who had accompanied Paul in delivering the collection. For him to be in the city was not the same as Paul taking him into the temple. (PBC)

21:30 *dragged him out of the temple* – The mob, bent on killing Paul, dragged him from the temple so that their holy place would not be defiled by the shedding of blood. (PBC)

gates were shut. By order of the temple officer to prevent further trouble inside the sacred precincts. (CSB)

Temple police closed inner and outer courts so that additional defilement of the temple would not occur. (TLSB)

The gates of the inner court were closed so that he could not run back inside for refuge. The mob and the temple police were very concerned about defilement under the ceremonial law, but less concerned about the moral law which forbids murder. (PBC)

21:31 *tribune.* Greek *chiliarch*, a commander of 1,000 (a regiment)—Claudius Lysias by name (23:26), who was stationed at the Fortress of Antonia (see note on v. 37). (CSB)

Claudius Lysias (cf 23:26), the Roman officer in charge of 760 infantrymen and 240 cavalrymen. (TLSB)

cohort – They were quartered in the Antonia Tower, which overlooked the temple area from the northwest corner. It had been built there because through the years most disturbances in Jerusalem had begun in the temple area. (PBC)

Stationed at the Roman fortress Antonia, outside the northwest wall of the temple. (TLSB)

21:32 *took soldiers.* Centurions. Since the plural is used, it is likely that at least two centurions and 200 soldiers were involved. (CSB)

Since there were at least two centurions called out, up to 200 soldiers may have been summoned. (TLSB)

beating Paul. Members of the angry mob beat Paul because they misunderstood what was happening. (TLSB)

21:33 *two chains.* Probably his hands were chained to a soldier on either side. (CSB)

The tribune believed Paul to be the wrongdoer because he was the one being attacked. His men take custody of Paul, placing him in chains. (TLSB)

21:34 *barracks.* At the fortress Antonia (*War* 6:23–26) (TLSB)

21:35 *steps.* Two flights of steps connected the fortress and the outer court of the temple. (TLSB)

carried by the soldiers. The pressing mob prevented Paul from walking up the steps, so the soldiers lifted him. (TLSB)

21:36 *away with him* – Echoes the cry of the crowd against Jesus in the hearing before Pilate. (Sacra)

Meant “Kill him!” (PBC)

The crowd at Jesus’ trial raised the same cry. (TLSB)

21:27–36 Paul’s enemies unjustly accuse him of defiling the temple, and the Roman authorities intervene. The mob mentality of Paul’s accusers may appall us, yet we may jump to similar unfounded conclusions. As God’s forgiven people, we are motivated and inspired to seek the truth in all matters, especially as we interact with our neighbor. Jesus allowed Himself to be charged unjustly so He could win forgiveness for us. He is our peace. • Dear Jesus, make us slow to speak accusations. Lead us to seek and speak the truth instead of falsehood (Eph 4:25). Amen. (TLSB)

Paul Speaks to the People

37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek? **38** Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” **39** Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people.” **40** And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

21:37 *barracks*. The Fortress of Antonia was connected to the northern end of the temple area by two flights of steps. The tower overlooked the temple area. (CSB)

do you know Greek – The commander’s questions was not a request for information. Rather, it expressed his surprise that Paul addressed him in Greek. (PBC)

The tribune was either surprised Paul spoke Gk, or that he spoke it so well. The crowd was probably shouting in Aramaic. (TLSB)

21:38 *the Egyptian who...stirred up a revolt*. Josephus tells of an Egyptian false prophet who some years earlier had led 4,000 (Josephus, through a misreading of a Greek capital letter, says 30,000) out to the Mount of Olives. Roman soldiers killed hundreds, but the leader escaped. (CSB)

The tribune mistook Paul for the man who had convinced a number of people he was a prophet a few years earlier. He led 4,000 troops against the Romans at Jerusalem, promising that the walls of the city would fall simply because of his presence. The Romans crushed the revolt, but the Egyptian escaped (*War* 2:261). (TLSB)

assassins. The Greek here is a loanword from Latin *sicarii*, meaning “dagger-men,” who were violent assassins. (CSB)

Terrorist literally means “dagger men.” They were extreme Jewish nationalists who were ready to take direct action against Romans and others whom they considered to be enemies of the Jewish people. Their usual method was to assassinate individuals, often stabbing them at festival gatherings and then disappearing into the crowds. They sparked the revolt of A.D. 66, which finally led to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Jewish historian Josephus writes that in A.D. 54 an Egyptian led a revolt of 4000 dagger men which the Romans quashed. Hundreds were killed, but the leader escaped. The commander’s question was a probing question, trying to determine why the Jews had turned on Paul with such murderous fanaticism. Could it be that he was that Egyptian and that the Jews were taking vengeance on the man who led so many of their countrymen to death while he himself escaped? (PBC)

21:39 *I am a Jew* – He may speak Greek, but he also speaks Aramaic, he may be from a Diaspora city, but his upbringing is in Jerusalem; he may work among the Gentiles, but his zeal for God is the same as his compatriots. (Sacra)

Paul makes his status clear to the tribune. (TLSB)

Tarsus. Cilicia was in southeastern Asia Minor. Tarsus was its capital. It was famous as a center of Greek learning. It was a gateway for land travel between Asia Minor and the rest of Asia and therefore an important trade center. (PBC)

21:40 *Hebrew*. More likely Aramaic than Hebrew, since Aramaic was the most commonly used language among Palestinian Jews. (CSB)

However unlikely it may appear that a commander in such a situation would allow his prisoner to address the mob – although Paul’s Hellenistic credentials might have slightly overawed the tribune momentarily - this first defense begins a series of such speeches by Paul that will dominate the rest of the narrative. (Sacra)

Indicates that Paul now spoke to the crowd in Aramaic, the common language of Judea. (TLSB)