

# THE BOOK OF ACTS

## ACTS 21:17-40 | LESSON SUMMARY

### Arrested Again

**ACTS 21:17**, "When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly." (ESV)

- Paul is staying with Hellenic Jews—he knows that his primary opposition is with authorities
  - Both Jewish religious leaders, and Roman authorities
- There is joy at what God has done among the Gentiles, but Jewish-Christians have been told lies about Paul and are highly suspicious
  - "...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." (Acts 21:21, ESV)
  - The plan is for Paul to demonstrate what he believes—to put his actual words (not those twisted by others) into action

**ACTS 21:23-24**, "Do therefore what we tell you." (ESV)

- Paul agrees and has inspired great controversy as a result
- Many scholars believe this to be a compromise
- Never does Paul suggest this should be required of Gentiles



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- Paul still observes Jewish rituals, including taking Nazirite vow (1 Corinthians 9:20)
  - This vow was about thanksgiving and dedication, not atonement

**ACTS 21:27**, "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..." (ESV)

- The lies spread about Paul are similar to those spread about Stephen (Acts 6)
  - "...they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses..." (Acts 21:21)
  - "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." (Acts 6:11)
- The mob then accuses Paul of bringing Greeks into the temple
  - "For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city..." (Acts 21:29, ESV)
  - It was forbidden for a Gentile to go beyond the barricade and enter the temple and enclosure
  - The Romans authorized the Jews to execute trespassers, even if the offender was a Roman citizen
  - The accusation is false, but even if it were true Trophimus would be the trespasser, not Paul



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**ACTS 21:32**, "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." (ESV)

- Roman soldiers intervene before the mob beats Paul to death
- The "tribune" is the military commander
  - A "chiliarch" commands a thousand soldiers
- Violence so intense Paul is actually carried away by soldiers
  - "And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd..." (Acts 21:35, ESV)

**ACTS 21:37**, "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?" (ESV)

- Mistaken identity: Paul is no Egyptian leading an army of four thousand called Assassins
  - Account mentioned by historian Josephus
- Switches from Greek to Hebrew
  - Possibly Aramaic

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, R. Kent Hughes, *The Church Afire*

