

“LET THE WILL OF THE LORD BE DONE”

Acts 21:1–26

Key Verse: 21:14

1. Note the words “we,” “our” and “us” in verses 1–18. Who is with Paul (20:4–6), and why? After leaving Miletus, where do they go (21:1; see a map; what do we know about each place)? Where are they headed (2–3)? What do we know about Tyre in Phoenicia (cf. 11:19; 15:3). What happens there (4)? How and why is their parting described (5–6)?
2. Where do they go next (7–8a). Find out what you can about Caesarea (cf. 8:40; 9:30; 10:1–2 & 11:11–15). In this city, with whom does Paul and his team stay, and why (8b–9)? Who is Agabus (10; 11:28), and what is his message (11)? How does it influence Paul’s followers and the people there (12)?
3. Read verse 13; compare with 20:22–24; also Luke 6:22–23; 9:23–24; 21:12. What can we learn from Paul here about being a witness of Jesus?
4. Read verse 14. How do those around Paul respond (Matt.6:10; 26:39), and what does this mean? How can we live with such faith today?
5. Who else joins this team to Jerusalem, who cares for them there (15–16), and what is the significance of this? Describe Paul’s meeting with the brothers, and with James and the Jerusalem elders (17–19). How do they respond to his report at first (20a)?
6. What do the elders tell Paul (20b–22), what do they propose (23–24), and why? What do they say about the Gentile believers, and why (25)? What does Paul do, and why (26)? Compare with 1 Cor.9:19–23. Why will this “purification” gesture not work (see 22:17–21; 23:11)? What more does this show about “the will of the Lord”?

References:

Q1: Acts 20:4–6: “Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.”

11:19: “Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.”

15:3: “So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.”

Q2: Acts 8:40: “But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.”

9:30: “And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.”

10:1–2 & 11:11–15: “At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God... ‘And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered [Cornelius’] house. And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, “Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.” As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.”

11:28: “And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).”

Q3: Acts 20:22–24: “And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 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.”

Luke 6:22–23: “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”

9:23–24: “And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.’”

21:12: “But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake.”

Q4: Matt.6:10: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

26:39: “And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.’”

Q6: 1 Cor.9:19–23: “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”

Acts 22:17–21: “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they

will not accept your testimony about me.’ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

23:11: “The following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.’”