

Acts of the Apostles Session 8
Acts 21-24: Showdown in Jerusalem

Riots in the streets! Prayer for peace, healing and justice.

When have you seen the gospel cause conflict? What was the outcome?

Quiz Time!

1. What was the name of the shepherd/poet/priest/second founder of Athens who is connected with the altars “to an unknown god” that Paul references at the Areopagus?
2. What had the Church in Ephesus *never heard of* when Paul visited them the first time?
3. Name three people who were companions of Paul at some point during his missionary journeys.

Outline of Chapters 21-24:

- “we” continue travels all the way to Tyre.
- “They kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to embark for Jerusalem”
- Hospitality of the disciples (different from Jewish authorities and Romans)
- Caesarea and the house of “Philip the evangelist” who had four daughters “gifted with prophecy” (21:7-9)
- Agabus the prophet!
- Paul set on going to Jerusalem
- Paul and James (and clearing up misunderstandings)
- Paul and the four men go to the temple
- Ephesians have Paul arrested (21: 27-40) and confusion of his trial
- Chapter 22—Paul’s defense (be my witnesses in Jerusalem...)
- Retelling his encounter with Jesus
- Rejected at “Go, I shall send you far away to the Gentiles.” (22:21)
- Paul a Roman citizen (escaping *another* beating!)
- Chapter 23: “I am on trial for hope in the resurrection of the dead”
- V. 11: “take courage. For just as you have born witness to my cause in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome.”
- Plots to kill Paul
- Chapter 24: Trial before Felix
- Felix to Festus...

Fr. Luke on Saint Paul

- Paul, a Roman citizen
- Sinner
- Change in him on the Road to Damascus
- 2 Corinthians: a change not merely of attitude, but his whole life was transformed, he was willing to suffer for the Lord.
- Boast of my weaknesses...

1. Christian Hospitality: they will know we are Christians by our love...

- 21:4, 5. “All of them, women and children included, escorted us out of the city, and after kneeling on the beach to pray...”

- Break bread, pray, welcome into home, prophecy, give alms, encourage, fast together, discern where to go next, commission and send apostles out. These are the marks of disciples in Acts.
- Where is the virtue or charism of hospitality most needed and/or visibly absent in the life of the Church today?

2. **Prophecy:**

- four virgin daughters of Philip the Evangelist, “gifted with prophecy”
- Prophet Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10-12)
- 1 Corinthians 14:1; also, Ephesians 4
- Ministry or office of prophet
- Where do we need to the ministry/charism of prophecy in the Church today?

3. **James and Paul in Jerusalem**

- “when we reached Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us warmly”
- Why all this *Jewishness*? (tongue in cheek question!)
- See the letter of St. James as the great balancing of an un-hinged reading of Paul
 - We need prophetic, we need institutional. We need John and Peter, or Mary and Peter, or Paul and James. The great Catholic both-and!
- The violence of the mobs: “the whole city was in turmoil with people rushing together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the gates were closed...” (Acts 21:30)
 - Paul is not an Egyptian (21:37-39)
- Paul rejected because of the mission to the Gentiles
- Paul the Roman Citizen (22:25-29)

4. **Trial before Sanhedrin and extended imprisonment**

- Echoes of Jesus
- On trial for the *resurrection*
- Words of Jesus in 23: 11
- Corruption and incompetence of Roman system

Felix the Governor: the Roman procurator of Samaria and Judea. He was born a slave, freed by the mother of Emperor Claudius. Claudius tended to favor people who depended on him due to suspicion of rivals. According to Tacitus, Felix “with all cruelty and lust wielded the power of king, with the mentality of a slave.” Several uprisings during his rule, known for harshness and being notoriously incompetent. Riots in Caesarea that led to killing and plundering of Jews by his own men. Married to Drusilla, daughter of Herod Agrippa I, one of three queens he married, including the granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra. (24:26-27) Felix allows Paul to languish in prison for two years, likes to listen to Paul (echoes of Herod and John the Baptist), and is hoping for a bribe. Felix continues to summon Paul but leaves him in prison.

Now, finally, Paul is heading to Rome! We will journey with him!

Answers to Quiz!

For next week, finish the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 25-28

For Zoom Meeting today, but please reflect on these questions and we will finish strong for our last two meetings next Wednesday and the week after that! Pick one spokesperson for

your group, and share your answers (especially for questions 2 and 3) with the larger group. Take 20 minutes in the small group then lets come back together in the large group.

1. What is one part of the readings or teaching that particularly stuck out to you?
2. Where might the role of prophets be needed in the Church today? Why might we be tempted to ignore or brush over the prophets God has sent us?
3. At this time the Christians did not have a standard word for themselves, and nobody else knew what to call them either. Paul uses the term *the Way* (Acts 24:14; Acts 9:2. 16:17, etc.). Why is *the Way* a fitting term for following Christ? How might that term help you to live your own faith in a more intentional, dynamic manner?
4. What is one way that God is inviting you to follow Him this week, especially in light of current events and the readings? Remember, **not how *other* people are being called to change, but how *you are being called to follow God in this present situation.***