

The Acts of the Apostles

[Wed. Apr. 22, 2015] Acts Series, Acts 21.1-26 – Craig A. Thurman

Chapter 21

This is a very difficult chapter to consider, and we will try our best to discern the truth concerning a matter related to the remarks of James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem, and Paul's response to them. Reconciling what takes place here with other Scriptures which *seem* to stand in contradiction to this episode depends greatly upon how we view the book of Acts. For example, the Pentecostal's view of the book of Acts is that it is a template for all churches everywhere for all time without exception. That has led to much error: the continuation of sign gifts (of knowledge, prophecies, and especially speaking in unintelligible tongues); a hierarchical church government (which infects most religious organizations); communal living (many heretical sects promote their error from the book of Acts); universal church practices; open communion and more are, for the most part, derived from a misapplication of the events recorded in the Book of Acts.

Acts is one of 26 other books of the New Testament that has its own peculiar setting, just as the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have theirs (Acts 1.3 reveals their setting ... *of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*); the letters to the churches have a peculiar setting; the letters to the Messianic Jews have their setting. (Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter [Peter addresses the same audience in both letters, cf. 2Pe.3.1, the diaspora, dispersed])

So what is the setting of the book of Acts? Acts is an historical account of all that the church began both to do and teach, since Christ's resurrection, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, unto the end of the apostolic period. That is the scope of the book of Acts. It should become apparent that this is the general course of thought in Acts.

The book of Acts is the logical connection between the gospels and the epistles in the New Testament.

The book of Acts is practical evidence of Israel's temporary rejection by the Lord, and the engrafting of the Gentiles into the New Covenant with the remnant of Israel, who move away from the land of Palestine and into the nations. (Ro.11.12)

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The book of Acts leads to the history that just precedes the destruction of Israel in A.D.70. (history ceases about A.D.65)

The book of Acts marks the *beginning* of the interlude of church history, until the Lord returns to Israel and saves them. (Ro.11.26) At the *end* of this interlude Israel will once again be preeminent in the earth for a millennium.

The actions of the first churches recorded in this book are in no way as established as those later churches which possess the whole revelation of the Word of God. (We prove this in the study today.) Such a thought frustrates the whole purpose for having any revelation at all. The truth is, the more revelation the churches receive the better their actions should become. Who would argue the point that the church epistles present the clearest teachings of doctrine than the book of Acts? That does not mean one book is less important than another. No. But we should consider the setting of each book so that we conclude things from it that are harmonious with the *whole* revelation of the Word of God.

(Read Acts 21.1-26; the question of the applicability of the law falls within verses 20-26.)

Acts is in a sense a book of beginnings. It marks the beginning of the outgrowth of the first church in Jerusalem over a period of approximately 30 years. The revelation of the Word of God to them at this time is really what we must try to discern. How extensive was the understanding of the Jewish saints' of the passing away of the Old Covenant? Did James and Paul, or any of them, know to what extent the Law was to be done away in Christ? Yes, it was fulfilled, but what did that mean to them? Did they know how extensively this would affect them?

Mt 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Did they comprehend to any degree at this time that they were to cease with the sacrifices, to cease with the festivals, to leave circumcision as a means for righteousness to God? Let me assert at this point that from all that we have seen thus far in our study of Acts the answer to that question is, No, they did not

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understand the removal of the Law of Moses and circumcision to be the will of God at that time. This should be obvious to us. All we need do is recall at this moment in our Acts account (chapter 20) why was Paul going back to Jerusalem? Did he not say that he *hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost?* (Acts 20.16) In Acts 18.21 he had already made a trip back to Israel to *keep this feast* which could have referred to *Passover*. Paul was observing the Jewish holidays. He was doing what he could with the information that he had revealed to him at the time. But does this conclude the matter? I believe the answer is, No, it does not.

Does the Bible sanction a Jewish Christian church and a Gentile Christian church? The question is not whether there were churches like this in the beginning of church history, or that there are such churches today, but does the Bible, the full revelation of the Word of God, sanction such distinctions in the Lord's church or churches? The Acts 15 council in Jerusalem concerning the necessity *for Gentiles* being circumcised and keeping the law of Moses only settled the issue as it related to the Gentile saints, and **in no way touched upon the subject as it related to the Messianic Jew**. That subject was not addressed then, nor has it been addressed since, *in the book of Acts*. The great question now is, Does the Word of God address it? We believe it does.

At the time of **this present narrative we are about 8-10 years from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70**. Paul has made his final farewell remarks to the Ephesian brethren at Miletus and has continued his journey back to the land of Israel for Pentecost.

ἀπ' αὐτῶν

1 ¶ *And it came to pass, that after **we were gotten** from them,
were withdrawn*

Paul is not traveling alone. Throughout this chapter we know that Luke is accompanying Paul on this journey. He will likely be a witness of the things that takes place against Paul. Luke will be allowed to reunite with Paul after his arrest and will accompany him into Rome. His last personal witness in Acts is at 28.16. (cf. 2Ti.4.11)

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ἀποσπασθέντας; acc pl, masc, part, aor 1, **pass** of ἀποσπάω; ἀπό from, forth, off, since + σπάω KJV *drew* a sword (only used twice in N.T.); ἀποσπάω is only used in Mt. 26.51 **drew** his sword; Lk.22.41 he **was withdrawn** from them; Acts 20.30 **to draw away** disciples after them; Acts 21.1 **after** we **were gotten** from them.

and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos,

Or Cos, an island which is about 45 miles south of Miletus. Today the island is still named Kos.

and the day following

ἐξῆς is used in Lk.7.11 came to pass **the day after**; 9.37 on the **next day**; Acts 21.1 the day **following**; 25.17 **on the morrow**; 27.18 **the next day** they lightened. So καθεξῆς stresses in succession.

More ... KJV Lk.1.3 *in order*; 8.1 *afterward*; Acts 3.24 *after*; 11.4 *by order*.

unto Rhodes,

This large island is located at the southwest corner in the Aegean Sea about 60 miles southeastwardly from Coos.

and from thence unto Patara:

A coastal city now on the Mediterranean Sea about 125 miles almost due east from Rhodes.

Ὡς δὲ ἐγένετο ἀναχθῆναι ἡμᾶς ἀποσπασθέντας ἀπ' αὐτῶν εὐθυδρομήσαντες ἤλθομεν εἰς τὴν Κῶν, τῇ δὲ ἐξῆς εἰς τὴν Ῥόδον κακεῖθεν εἰς Πάταρα

2 And finding a ship sailing over

διαπερῶν; acc sing, neut, part, pres of διαπεράω; διά by, through + περάω or πέραν [per the B-D-A-G Lexicon] an adverb, KJV *beyond*,

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otherside; , KJV passed over, when ... were gone over, when ... was passed over; when ... had passed over; can ... pass; sailing over.

unto Phenicia, (Or, Phoenicia) we went aboard, and set forth.

Καὶ εὐρόντες πλοῖον διαπερῶν εἰς Φοινίκην ἐπιβάντες ἀνήχθημεν

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus,

The island home of Barnabas. (4.36; 15.29)

we left it

καταλιπόντες; nom, pl, masc, part, aor 2, act of καταλείπω; κατά according to, down + λείπω KJV *lack, want, destitute; often leave (Mt.4.13), then forsake (Heb.11.27), and reserve (Ro.11.4).* Acts has this word used six times: *Acts 2.31 was ... left; 6.2 leave; 18.19; 21.3 24.27; 25.14 left.*

on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

In other words, they sailed under or on the southern side of the island of Cyprus, the side furthest from the mainland of Turkey) as they headed to Phoenicia, Syria. (350-360 miles from Patara.) They reached the shores of home and now begin a southerly coastal route by ship.

ἀναφάναντες δὲ τὴν Κύπρον καὶ καταλιπόντες αὐτὴν εὐώνυμον ἐπλέομεν εἰς Συρίαν καὶ κατήχθημεν εἰς Τύρον ἐκεῖσε γὰρ ἦν τὸ πλοῖον ἀποφορτιζόμενον τὸν γόμον

4 And finding

ἀνευρόντες; nom, pl, masc, part, aor 2 of ἀνευρίσκω; ἀνά again, re- + εὐρίσκω to find; only used one other time in the N.T. (*Lk.2.16 and found Mary, and Joseph; perhaps discovered.*

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disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

The mention of disciples suggests to us that at the least there was one church in this city. Where did this church come from? We don't know. As the churches of Cilicia originated we know not when or by whom, so did this and the next place, Ptolemais.

Καὶ ἀνευρόντες τοὺς μαθητὰς ἐπεμείναμεν αὐτοῦ ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ οἵτινες τῷ Παύλῳ ἔλεγον διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος μὴ ἀναβαίνειν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ

5 And when we had accomplished those days (7days), we departed and went our way; and they all brought

προπεμπόντων; gen, pl, masc, part, pres, act of προπέμπω; πρό before, first, above + πέμπω to send; Or, being sent. KJV Acts 15.3 *being brought on ... way; 20.38 accompanied; 21.5 brought ... on ... way*

us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

ὅτε δὲ ἐγένετο ἡμᾶς ἐξαρτίσαι τὰς ἡμέρας ἐξελθόντες ἐπορευόμεθα προπεμπόντων ἡμᾶς πάντων σὺν γυναίξιν καὶ τέκνοις ἕως ἔξω τῆς πόλεως καὶ θέντες τὰ γόνατα ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν προσηυξάμεθα,

*6 And when we had taken our leave
saluted or embraced*

ἀσπασάμενοι; nom, pl masc, part, aor 1 of ἀσπάζομαι; KJV *salute, greet, embrace, leave.* (cf. Acts 18.22; 20.1; 21.6, 7, 19; 25.13)

one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

Καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι ἀλλήλους ἐπέβημεν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον ἐκεῖνοι δὲ ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς τὰ ἴδια

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came

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κατηντήσαμεν; 1st p pl aor 1, ind of *καταντάω*; *κατά* according to, down, successively + *άντάω* ; mostly found in Acts and translated with the English words *came* (11), *attain* (2); the idea is *reached* in successive order. *κατηντήσαμεν*, Acts 21.7; 28.13.

to Ptolemais,

Which is approximately 22-25 miles south of Tyre.

and saluted

ἀσπασάμενοι; nom, pl, masc, part, aor 1 of *ἀσπάζομαι*; KJV *salute, greet, embrace, leave*. (cf. Acts 18.22; 20.1; 21.6, 7, 19; 25.13)

the brethren, and abode with them one day.

Here we have the mention of *brethren*, which again suggests to us that there is at least one church in this city. Now this adds more validity in a moments to the words of James in verse 20 (*thousands of Jews there are which believe*) The Lord's churches are everywhere! How do Christians find Christians? They must say so themselves, or enquire it of others.

Ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸν πλοῦν διανύσαντες ἀπὸ Τύρου κατηντήσαμεν εἰς Πτολεμαῖδα καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἐμείναμεν ἡμέραν μίαν παρ' αὐτοῖς

8 ¶ *And the next day **we** that were of Paul's company departed,*

Which makes it clear that the *brethren* of this place did not accompany Paul as he pressed on.

and came unto Caesarea:

About 28 miles from Ptolemais.

*and **we** entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.*

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We are informed about who this Philip is, and there is no doubt concerning his identity. He is said to be *one of the seven*. This phrase takes us to chapter 6 of Acts.

Ac 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

From this we know that he is the same who had moved out from the Jerusalem church because of the persecution of Paul. He had preached to the Samaritans (8.5); then to the eunuch (8.26-38); then was found at Azotus (8.40); and then finally settled in Caesarea. (8.40) Now, Paul is coming to his house years later as a brother in Christ. How things change when the Lord does a work of grace in the heart. There is need for grace on both sides of this issue. Grace changed Paul's mind about God's people, and grace changed the minds of His people about Paul. These are reconciled to God and to one another by shed blood of Jesus Christ the Lord. These who were once enemies are now made at peace in Christ.

Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον ἐξελθόντες οἱ περὶ τὸν Παῦλον ἦλθον εἰς Καισάρειαν καὶ εἰσελθόντες εἰς τὸν οἶκον Φιλίππου τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ τοῦ ὄντος ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐμείναμεν παρ' αὐτῷ

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Philip's daughters were used of the Lord to prophesy His Word. That I know of, we have only two instances in the New Testament where women prophesied. Anna was a prophetess.

*Lu 2:36 And there was one Anna, **a prophetess**, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity ...*

Joel prophesied of this:

*Ac 2:18 (cf. Joel 2.28) And on my servants **and on my handmaidens** I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and **they shall prophesy**
προφητευσουσιν ...*

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Jezebel, in Revelation 2.20 was not a prophetess, but she *called herself* a prophetess:

*Re 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which **calleth herself a prophetess**, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

You know, we can call ourselves whatever we want, but that doesn't make it so.

She was no prophetess of the Lord. She was a false prophetess. We notice that the Lord gave her a *space to repent of her **fornication**; and she repented not*. This is not repentance unto salvation. She was to stop her fornication and she did not. She was a reprobate, a wolf, a false teacher, false prophet, and not an elect of God, a sheep, a disciple of Christ.

προφητεύουσαι; nom, pl, fem, part, pres of προφητεύω.

τούτω δὲ ἦσαν θυγατέρες παρθένοι τέσσαρες προφητεύουσαι

10 And as we tarried there many days,

Considering Paul's itinerary from Philippi to Israel, this stay was probably more than 10 and less than two weeks because of his constraints to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. Remember that he had left Philippi only **after** the days of unleavened bread, and that he *hasted* past Ephesus to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost. He had about the space of 50 days to make this trip from Philippi.

The term *many days* is used 3 times in the New Testament:

Acts 13.30 But God raised him from the dead:

*31 And he was seen **many days** ἡμέρας πλείους of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. (Jesus raised from the dead. *Many days* refers to the 40*

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days in which he showed Himself alive to the disciples on a number of occasions. *Ac 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ...* In other words there was about a 10 day absence of the Lord's appearance that preceded the day of Pentecost.)

*Ac 25:6 And when he had tarried among them **more than ten days** **ἡμερας πλειους η δεκα**, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.*

there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

Agabus was the prophet that was originally from Jerusalem that the Lord used to tell of a coming world-wide dearth. (Acts 11.28) Now he comes from somewhere in Judaea to Caesarea.

ἐπιμενόντων δὲ ἡμῶν ἡμέρας πλείους κατήλθεν τις ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰουδαίας προφήτης ὀνόματι Ἄγαβος

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And this is the report that Paul received everywhere that he had traveled. (cf. 20.22)

καὶ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ ἄρας τὴν ζώνην τοῦ Παύλου δήσας τε αὐτοῦ τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας εἶπεν Τάδε λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον Τὸν ἄνδρα οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ ζώνη αὕτη οὕτως δήσουσιν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ παραδώσουσιν εἰς χεῖρας ἐθνῶν

*12 And when we heard these things, both **we**, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

This is the first time that the Scriptures emphasize that even his close traveling companions, which included **Luke, were begging that he not**

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proceed to Jerusalem. But we know that Paul is said to have *purposed in the spirit ... to go to Jerusalem.* (Acts 19.21) This appears to carry the force of a vow. In Acts 20.22 he says, *I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem ...*

ὥς δὲ ἠκούσαμεν ταῦτα παρεκαλοῦμεν ἡμεῖς τε καὶ οἱ ἐντόπιοι τοῦ μὴ ἀναβαίνειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ

13 *Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break*

συνθρύπτοντες; nom pl masc, part, pres of **συνθρύπτω**; **σύν** together, with + **θρύπτω** [?]; I think it means *with breaking*. Nothing in LXX; NIDNTT; TDNT, B-D-A-G, Thayer's; J. P. Green's Interlinear N.T. *crushing*;

mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

ἀπεκρίθη δὲ ὁ Παῦλος τί ποιεῖτε κλαίοντες καὶ συνθρύπτοντές μου τὴν καρδίαν ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐ μόνον δεθῆναι ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀποθανεῖν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐτοίμως ἔχω ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ

14 *And when he would not be persuaded, **we** ceased,*

Meaning, that Luke and the traveling companions, and those of the disciples of Christ with them, *have quieted* themselves from trying to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem.

ἠσυχάσαμεν; 1st p pl, aor 1, ind of **ἠσυχάζω**; KJV *held ... peace; rested; ceased, to be quiet; silenced or quieted.* (cf. 22.2 noun, *silence*)

Saying, The will of the Lord be done.

γενέσθω; 3rd p s, aor 2, imper of **γίνομαι** to become. Five times is used in the N.T. (; Lk.22.26, 42 *let ... be; be done*; 1Co.3.18 *let ... become*; 14.26 *Let ... be done*)

Μὴ πειθομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ ἠσυχάσαμεν εἰπόντες τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου γενέσθω

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15 ¶ *And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.*

Took up our carriages, ἀποσκευασάμενοι; nom, pl, masc, part, aor 1, mid of ἀποσκευάζομαι; ἀπό forth, of, from, since + σκευάζομαι the act of moving goods or stuff; baggage [LXX, Ge.14.12 baggage; 15.14 property; 31.18 store; Le. 14.36 furniture]; only this once used in the N.T.

Μετὰ δὲ τὰς ἡμέρας ταύτας ἀποσκευασάμενοι ἀνεβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱερουσόλημ

16 *There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple,*

An old disciple, ἀρχαίῳ μαθητῆ; ἀρχαίῳ, archaio, from which we have our English word archaic; dat, sing, masc of ἀρχαῖος; KJV old 11, and once combined with the Greek days, a good while ago. LXX, ancient, old.

with whom we should lodge.

*Should lodge, ξενισθῶμεν; 1st p, pl, aor 1, subj, pass of ξενίζω; KJV lodge, entertain, strange; it is the act of the part of a traveler with an host; perhaps we could translate this, with whom we **should be lodged**, or were to lodge.*

Συνῆλθον δὲ καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν ἀπὸ Καισαρείας σὺν ἡμῖν ἄγοντες παρ' ᾧ ξενισθῶμεν Μνάσωνί τινι Κυπρίῳ ἀρχαίῳ μαθητῆ

17 *And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.*

Gladly, ἀσμένως; adverb; Acts 2.41 only other place where this word is used. Both times translated gladly; so also the LXX 2Mac.4.12; 3Mac.5.21); perhaps a special greeting at reception. Both instances in the N.T. appear to have this similarity: Acts 2.41 the saints gladly received the word; Act 21.17 the saints gladly received these brethren.

Γενομένων δὲ ἡμῶν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἀσμένως ἐδέξαντο ἡμᾶς οἱ ἀδελφοί

18 *And the day following Paul went in with us unto James;*

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James, brother of John, these both being sons of Zebedee, was slain by the sword of Herod. (Acts 12.1, 2) This appears to be James, pastor of the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 15.13) James is one of 4 brothers-in-the-flesh, and at least two sisters, by his mother Mary. (Mt.13.55) It might be that Joseph had died early on and Mary remarried Cleophas (Alphaeus) and bore these other children.

*Mr 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of **James**, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*

If this is the same James, he is also called *James the less*. (Mk.15.40) Here are the names of the twelve apostles:

- i. Simon Peter (also called Cephas)
- ii. Andrew
- iii. James, son of Boanerges or Zebedee
- iv. John “ “ “
- v. Philip
- vi. Thomas (Didymus, a twin)
- vii. Matthew (Levi), a tax collector/Publican, self given name to show the grace of God.
- viii. Bartholomew (Nathaniel, John Gill)
- ix. James, son of Alphaeus, brother of our Lord (Gal.1.19); James the less (Mk.15.40); his father Alphaeus is the same as Cleopas (Lk.24.18; Jn.19.25), who is brother to Joseph, Mary’s husband.
- x. Lebbaeus (Thaddaeus) (Jude and the writer of the book that bears his name; brother to James, son of Alphaeus.
- xi. Simon the Canaanite; (called Zelotes, a zealot, Lk.6.15;) not a Canaanite, for he was a Jew, but he came from this area.
- xii. Judas Iscariot (In the synoptic gospels he is always mentioned last of all.)

James was a part of the elders (of whom are not classes of elders) of this church. (cf. Acts 15.13) Those who had come to Jerusalem with Paul went to see James and Paul came with them. That is the sense of this Scripture. Perhaps these traveling companions wished to inform James and the elders

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of the danger that awaits Paul. This also lends much to the thought that Paul thought himself to be no man deserving any special notice.

*Ga 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but **privately** to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*

1Co 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Eph 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ...

Paul sincerely believed this and practiced it. This was not some pretentious, false humility.

and all the elders

πρεσβύτεροι; nom and voc pl, masc, of πρεσβύτερος, presbuteros; Mt.15.2; Acts 4.5, 8, leaders of Israel; Lk.15.25, an oldest son; Jn.8.9; Acts 2.17; 1Ti.5.1, older men contrasted with younger men; **Acts 11.30; 14.23; 1Ti.5.17**, leaders among the church; 1Ti.5.2 older women. The context will define the meaning of the term *elder*.

In these two verses (17, 18) we see the brethren (meaning the church as a whole), James, and the elders. But this day we know that James and the elders ...

were present.

Παρεγένοντο; 3rd p pl, aor 2, ind of παραγίνομαι; παρά near, by, beside + γίνομαι be, become; *and when they **came***; KJV translates παρεγένοντο, Mt.2.1; Lk.8.19; Acts 13.14, *came*; Acts 20.18 *were come*; Acts 21.18 *were present*.

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Τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ εἰσῆει ὁ Παῦλος σὺν ἡμῖν πρὸς Ἰάκωβον πάντες τε παρεγένοντο οἱ πρεσβύτεροι

19 *And when he had saluted*

ἀσπασάμενος; nom, sing, masc, part, aor 1 of ἀσπάζομαι; KJV *salute, greet, embrace, leave.*

*Ac 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and **saluted ἀσπασάμενος** the church, he went down to Antioch.*

Ac 20:1 ¶ And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

ἐποίησεν ἐν
them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles
3rd p s, aor 1, ind, act

by his ministry.

Καὶ ἀσπασάμενος αὐτοὺς ἐξηγεῖτο καθ' ἕνα ἕκαστον ὧν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν διὰ τῆς διακονίας αὐτοῦ

20 *And when **they** heard it, **they** glorified the Lord, **and said** unto him,*

The elders, including James, said testified the following things to Paul:

*Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of **Jews there are which believe;***

πεπιστευκότων, gen, pl, masc, part, perf of πιστεύω; the genitive is used three times; the nominative is only used twice, Acts 15.5 *which believed;* Tit.3.8 *which have believed.*

Only three times is this verb tense used:

*Ac 19.18 And many **that believed** πεπιστευκότων came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.*

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*Ac 21:25 As touching the Gentiles **which believe** πεπιστευκότων, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.*

At the declaration of Paul testifying of the great work of God among the Gentiles, James and the elders of the Jerusalem church began to relate to Paul how many there are among Jewry that had come to faith in Christ Jesus. The thousands of believers in Jesus Christ, that the elders cite, can refer to the fact that Christ is received throughout the land of Israel, not only in Jerusalem. But now, notice ...

And they are ὑπάρχουσιν

are [all zealous] **possessors** of the law, that is, the thousands of believing Jews

ὑπάρχουσιν; 3rd p pl, pres, ind of ὑπάρχω; ὑπό under, among + ἄρχω to be preimminent; ;

all zealous

ζηλωταὶ; nom pl of ζηλωτής and is always translated *zealous* in the KJV; *zealous* of the law, toward God, spiritual gifts, of the traditions, of good works.

Ζηλωταὶ is the only other place this is used:

*1Co 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are **zealous** ζηλωταὶ of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*

of the law:

Beyond any doubt we are faced with the fact that the law of Moses, as it related to the believing Jews is still in force. **These Jewish saints are adherents of the Law of Moses.** (cf. vs. 21)

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οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐδόξαζον τὸν Κύριον εἰπόν τε αὐτῷ Θεωρεῖς ἀδελφέ πόσαι
μυριάδες εἰσὶν Ἰουδαίων τῶν πεπιστευκότων καὶ πάντες ζηλωταὶ τοῦ νόμου
ὑπάρχουσιν

κατηγήθησαν δὲ περὶ σοῦ
21 *And they are informed of thee,*
concerning or about you

The believing Jewish adherents to the Law of Moses ... are informed by the
unbelieving Jews coming to Pentecost from Asia where Paul's ministry has
flourished.

*are informed, κατηγήθησαν; 3rd p pl aor 1, ind, pass of κατηγέω; KJV hast
been instructed; was instructed; are informed; were informed; being
instructed; might teach, that is taught; that teacheth; from this we have
catechize.*

ὅτι διδάσκεις ἀποστασίαν
that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake
acc sing

ἀπὸ Μωσέως
Moses, *saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to*
from Moses

walk after the customs.

ἔθεσιν; dat pl of ἔθος; a custom [a habit or arrangement of practice] Lk.1.9,
manner (Acts 15.1); 7 times in Acts (6.14; 15.1; 16.21; 21.21; 25.16; 26.3;
28.17)

What do we know concerning the Law of Moses to this time?

*Jesus said, Mt 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or
the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

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Stephen was stoned to death on account of the message that he preached of Messiah's work, *Ac 6:14 For we have heard him [Stephen] say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.*

Years after Stephen's murder, James' message in the Jerusalem council settled the application of the Law of Moses to the gentiles totally: *Ac 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

And, Paul, according to the revelation given unto him of God continued with the Jews to observe it: *Ac 28:17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or **customs of our fathers**, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.*

Beyond question the believing Jews were offended at the report that was being brought back to their homeland of Paul's preaching to Jews that lived among the Gentiles. But is the report true?

First, consider the source of the accusation. Undoubtedly it was the unbelieving Jews who raised the accusation. (vs.27 The believing Jews of Asia, especially under the personal ministry of the apostle Paul would never have said this.) The purpose of the accusation is to cause division and attempt to frustrate the work of Christ.

Second, because the source is corrupt, the report must be false. (Mt.12.23; Ja.3.11, 12) It is highly unlikely that the Christ-rejecting Jews brought anything but a false report. And this report has affected the saints

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in Israel, and especially the church which was at Jerusalem. (Vs.24 James clearly has Paul do something to prove that the accusation is *false*.)

In the book of Acts, is there any Biblical evidence that suggests that Paul ever *said* or *taught* that the Jews should not circumcise their sons and forsake the law of Moses? No, there is not. And in a moment we shall consider all of the epistles of Paul that predate and succeed this event in Acts. But of those letters which predate this event there is nothing that substantiates their claim that Paul was claiming that they forsake the Law of Moses and quit circumcision. As a matter of fact, by the very Word of God, there is no evidence that any believing Jew ever thought such a thing: not Paul, not James, not the elders, not Luke, not any of his traveling companions; no one. With that in mind, James and the elders followed this up with ...

κατηχήθησαν δὲ περὶ σοῦ ὅτι ἀποστασίαν διδάσκεις ἀπὸ Μωσέως τοὺς κατὰ τὰ ἔθνη πάντας Ἰουδαίους λέγων μὴ περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς τὰ τέκνα μηδὲ τοῖς ἕθεσιν περιπατεῖν

τί οὖν ἐστίν

22 *What is it therefore?*

What is your answer to this? How much clearer can this be for us. Let's follow the sequence of thought. Is this report true or not?

τί οὖν ἐστίν is asked in these three other places:

*Lu 20:17 And he beheld them, and said, **What is this then** that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?*

*1Co 14:15 ¶ **What is it then?** I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*

*1Co 14:26 ¶ **How is it then, brethren?** When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a*

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revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

The multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

Pentecost has presented the occasion so that many of the Jews have gathered together in Jerusalem. Doubtless they will learn of Paul's presence. This is a serious accusation against one of their nation, whether believing or not, and must be answered one way or another.

Needs, πάντως, KJV Lk.4.23 surely; Acts 18.21 by all means; 21.22 needs; 28.4 no doubt; Ro.3.9 in no wise; 1Co.5.10 altogether; 9.10 altogether; 9.22 by all means; 16.12 at all.

Τί οὖν ἐστὶν πάντως δεῖ πλῆθος συνελθεῖν ἀκούσονται γὰρ ὅτι ἐλήλυθας

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

vow, εὐχήν; acc sing of εὐχή; εὐχή is found used three times in the NT (vow, Acts 18.18; 21.23; prayer Ja.5.15; not a vow as in a promise or a statement); these men have a good will, purpose or intent for what they do; a consecration [Thayer].

Τοῦτο οὖν ποιήσον ὃ σοι λέγομεν εἰσὶν ἡμῖν ἄνδρες τέσσαρες εὐχήν ἔχοντες ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν

*24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: **and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.***

James and the elders are advising Paul to discount the false charges against him, that he was advising the Jews to forsake the Law of Moses and that they should not circumcise their sons. (cf. Numbers chapter 6 for Nazarite vow[?])

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Brethren, at this, either Paul is purposefully deceiving his fellow-brethren concerning the application of the Law of Moses to the Messianic Jew; that he is being disingenuous, or else he did not believe and teach such things **at that time**. It is just that plain. But that poses for us a serious contradiction to what we understand to be true doesn't it?

For some who believe that the Law of Moses is still in force this does not pose any contradiction, but we believe by the Word of God that such are in great error, whether Jew and Gentile.

How can we reconcile this for them and us? Can we explain the seeming duplicity of this text? Your minds are probably referring to Scripture at this moment which deals with the law and its incompatibility with the New Covenant. And to that I whole-heartedly agree. But Paul is not deceiving his brethren, he is not being disingenuous, and the New Covenant is in fact incompatible with the Old.

To help with this consideration we would quote Adam Clarke (1760/2 – August 28, 1832), a British Methodist theologian and scholar. I do not subscribe to his theology, but we are agreed on this point.

'They are all zealous of the law. The Jewish economy was not yet destroyed; **nor had God as yet signified** that the whole of its observances were done away. He continued to tolerate that dispensation, **which was to be in a certain measure in force till the destruction of Jerusalem**; and from that period it was impossible for them to observe their own ritual. Thus God abolished the Mosaic dispensation, by rendering, in the course of his providence, the observance of it impossible.'

ibid., 'Verse 21. Thou teachest — to forsake Moses, that appears in the course of this book to the contrary, this **information was incorrect: we do not find Paul preaching thus to the Jews. It is true that, in his epistles, some of which had been written before this time, he showed that circumcision and uncircumcision were equally unavailable for the salvation, of the**

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soul, and that by the deeds of the law no man could be justified; but he had not yet said to any Jew, forsake Moses, and do not circumcise your children. He told them that Jesus Christ had delivered them from the yoke of the law; but they had, as yet, liberty to wear that yoke, if they pleased. He had shown them that their ceremonies were useless but not destructive; that they were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation. This is the sum of what Paul had taught on this subject.’ (bolding and color added)

ibid., ‘... God had not yet fully shown that the law was abolished, as has already been remarked: he tolerated it till the time that the iniquity of the Jews was filled up; and then, by the destruction of Jerusalem, he swept every rite and ceremony of the Jewish law away, with the besom [broom, inserted] of destruction.’

So, first, the time of this event in Acts chapter 21, precedes the clearest revelations of God’s Word concerning the Law of Moses being taken away.

Second, the providence of God will make it so that the Law of Moses cannot be performed by the entire nation of Israel: believers and unbelievers alike. In A.D. 70 national Israel is removed from the land, the temple is destroyed, and therefore all sacrifices cease.

The time of the Act 21 event.

Without even having to go to extra-biblical sources we may discover that the revelation of God was not given until after this event in Acts chapter 21 took place. First, of all of the letters written by Paul, those which predate Acts chapter 21 make no reference to his imprisonment or of his being in Rome. All subsequent letters mention either being in Rome or his being a prisoner. Below is a listing of the letters of Paul that predate Acts 21, and those that postdate it.

Letters preceding this event in A.D. 58, in order as they are in our Bible: (Makes no prisoner reference)	Letters that follow this event, in order as they are found in our Bible: (Contains prisoner/or Rome ref.)
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Romans – A.D. 58 1 & 2 Corinthians - A.D. 56/7 & 58 Galatians – A.D.51 1 & 2 Thessalonians – A.D. 51 & 52 1Timothy – A.D.57/8 Titus – A.D.53 8 Letters	Ephesians – A.D. 61 Philippians – A.D. 62 Colossians – A.D. 62 2 Timothy – A.D. 65/66 Hebrews – A.D. 62/3 Philemon – A.D. 62 6 Letters
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Now consider the development of the truth of God’s Word on this subject; taking the Pauline letters as they stand divided before and after his arrest. I have given them in a generally accepted chronological order as well.

Galatians: A.D.51; taken alone this could be interpreted to mean there could be a Jewish church and a Gentile church.

*Gal.2.6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:
 7 But contrariwise, when they saw that **the gospel of the uncircumcision** was committed unto me, as **the gospel of the circumcision** was unto Peter;
 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)
 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that **we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.***

1Thessalonians: (A.D.51);
 No issue concerning the law addressed in this letter.

2Thessalonians: (A.D.52)
 No issue concerning the law addressed in this letter.

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Titus: (A.D.53); only that Titus avoid strivings about the law; which could be said in light of a partial revelation concerning the law in this letter and historically.

*Tit 3:9 But **avoid** foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and **strivings about the law**; for they are unprofitable and vain.*

1Corinthians: (A.D.56/7) Here circumcision and uncircumcision are said to be nothing insofar as being accessories to righteousness; but in way dismisses the practice of circumcision.

*1Co 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.
20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.*

2Corinthians: (A.D.58) This is a remarkable statement that needs to be considered well. The true meaning of it might not have been fully appreciated until after more revelation of the Word of God.

*2Co 3:13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that **which is abolished**:*

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

*16 Nevertheless **when it shall turn to the Lord**, the vail shall be taken away.*

2Co 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (ἐλευθερία, freedom). (cf. 2Ti.2.25 in light of this text)

This does not say that when they believe the vail shall be taken away, but that for those who believe in Christ the

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vail shall be taken away *when it shall turn to the Lord* to open their understanding of the removal of Moses' law. It is evident that this has not become a reality at our reading in Acts. Neither Paul nor James, nor the elders of the church, nor any of the saints understood this truth as yet.

Romans: (A.D.58): Does not dismiss for the Jew the issues of the Law of Moses. It simply acknowledges that both the circumcision and the uncircumcision, Jew and Gentile, are justified by faith; that the law is established or put in its proper place.

Ro 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

1Timothy: (A.D.57/8) Law made for the unrighteous.

1Ti 1:7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;

9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers ...

The following Scriptures mark those letters written after Acts chapter 21. Notice the clarity of these statements which concern the law of Moses:

Ephesians: from Rome, (A.D.61); very clear about the law of Moses being removed.

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Eph 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

*15 **Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances;** for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

*17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, **and** to them that were nigh.*

*18 For through him **we both have access by one Spirit** unto the Father.*

Philippians: from Rome, (A.D.62); We are, Jew and Gentile, the true worshippers of God. (?)

Php 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Colossians: from Rome, (A.D.62); very clear about the dissolution of the law of Moses.

*Col 2:14 **Blotting out** the handwriting of ordinances **that was against us**, which was contrary to us, and **took it out of the way**, nailing it to his cross ...*

The ordinances of the law stood between the uniting of the Jews and Gentiles into the same body; if it was taken out of the way for the one, then it was as equally taken away for the other.

Philemon: nothing is said that concerns the law; (A.D.62)

Hebrews: (A.D.62/3); the whole letter is to move the believing remnant of Israel away from the law covenant and into the New Covenant.

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He. 7: 18 For there is verily a **disannulling of the commandment** going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

19 **For the law made nothing perfect**, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

...

He.8.6 ¶ But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7 For **if that first covenant had been faultless**, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to **the covenant that I made with their fathers** in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, **A new covenant**, he hath made

*hath made ... old, πεπαλαίωκεν; 3rd p s, perf ind act of παλαίω; KJV Lk.12.33 bag **which wax not old**; He. 1.11 they all **shall wax old** as doth a garment; put away our treasures where they can never deteriorate and the heavens and the earth deteriorate as a garment in the usefulness of the purpose of God.*

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the first old. [The oldness of the previous covenant is accomplished.] Now **that which decayeth**

which decayeth, παλαιούμενον; nom, sing, neut, part, pres, pass of **παλαιόω**; is decaying, is become old.

and waxeth old

γηρασκον; root γηράσκω; KJV only other place: *Jn. 21.18 When thou shalt be old, thou shalt, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands ...*; to reach the latest stage of life. From this Greek we have the noun *geriatrics*.

is ready to vanish away.

to vanish away, αφανισμού, gen, sing of αφανισμός; cf. He.4.13, not to be apparent; disappear] εν τω λεγειν καινην πεπαλαιωκεν την πρωτην το δε παλαιουμενον και γηρασκον εγγυς αφανισμού

The law of Moses at this time is on the verge of total dissipation to the believing Jews.

2Timothy: from Rome, (A.D.65/6)

Nothing is said of the law of Moses.

Showing the progressive revelation of God's Word on this subject proves:

That Paul was not disingenuous or deceitful to his believing, Jewish brethren concerning the doctrine he taught among the nations at that time.

That none of the saints, not Paul, James, the elders, or any Christians knew just how dissolved the Law of Moses and circumcision at this time in Acts chapter 21.

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Τούτους παραλαβὸν ἀγνίσθητι σὺν αὐτοῖς καὶ δαπάνησον ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἵνα
ξυρήσωνται τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ γνῶσιν πάντες ὅτι ὧν κατήχηνται περὶ σοῦ
οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἀλλὰ στοιχεῖς καὶ αὐτὸς τὸν νόμον φυλάσσω

25 *As touching the Gentiles which believe,*

πεπιστευκότων, gen, pl, masc, part, perf of πιστεύω; the genitive is used
three times; the nominative is only used twice, Acts 15.5 *which believed*;
Tit.3.8 *which have believed*.

Only three times is this verb tense used:

Ac 19.18 *And many **that believed** πεπιστευκότων came, and
confessed, and shewed their deeds.*

Ac 21:20 *And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said
unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are
which believe πεπιστευκότων; and they are all zealous of the law:*

*we have written and concluded that **they observe no such thing**, save only that
they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from
strangled,*

πνικτόν; acc, sing, neu of πνικτός; Only used three in the NT. (Acts 15.20,
29; 21.25) and always in reference to the conclusion of this conference.

And from fornication.

Again, notice, that James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem know
full well what the council of Acts 15 was all about. It touched on the
application of the Law of Moses to the Gentiles. That cannot be denied.
But it did not answer the application of the Law and circumcision to the
believing Jew. From James' own remarks he says that while we have
concluded that the Gentiles observe **no such thing**, we, the believing Jews
shall continue to observe the law of Moses and circumcision.

Περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἐθνῶν ἡμεῖς ἐπεστείλαμεν κρίναντες μηδὲν
τοιούτου τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰ μὴ φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς, τό τε εἰδωλόθυτον καὶ
τό, αἷμα καὶ πνικτόν καὶ πορνείαν

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26 *Then Paul took the men, and the next*

έχομένη; dat sing, fem, part, pres, pass of έχω, to have, possess; KJV, Acts **20.15**; 21.26 next; Lk.13.33 following.

day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

Paul, by so doing, indisputably denied that he was instructing the Jews among the nations to *forsake Moses*, and *not to circumcise their children*. That is the truth of the matter.

τότε ὁ Παῦλος παραλαβὼν τοὺς ἄνδρας τῆ ἑχομένη ἡμέρα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἄγνισθεις εἰσῆει εἰς τὸ ἱερόν διαγγέλλων τὴν ἐκπλήρωσιν τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ ἄγνισμοῦ ἕως οὗ προσηνέχθη ὑπὲρ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου αὐτῶν ἢ προσφορά