

**Message #49**  
**“ARRIVAL AND ARREST”**  
**(Acts 21:17-36)**



Paul's arrival in Jerusalem marked the end of his missionary journeys. Since his conversion on the road to Damascus, he has ministered freely (except for periods of imprisonment). But from this point on in Acts, Paul will be a prisoner. But, as we will continue to see, being a prisoner does not stop Paul ministering.

**Acts 21:17-18**

On arriving in Jerusalem, Paul and his companions were warmly welcomed by their Christian brothers and sisters. This, in itself, is significant. Paul's travel companions were Christians from Asia Minor and, thus, were Gentiles. For them to be so warmly welcomed by the Jewish believers reveals the impact of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and the unifying power of the gospel. James, the half-brother of Jesus, was one of the leaders of the Jerusalem Council and, now, he has become the leader of the church in Jerusalem, along with the “elders”. Paul, and Luke indicates that he and the others went with him, meets with James and the elders (vs 18).

**ELDERS**

When the church in Jerusalem began, it was “ruled” by the apostles (Acts 2:42; 4:35-37; 5:2).

As the church grew there was a need for assistance with practical and administrative details, so 7 men were chosen to serve (Acts 6:2-6).

“Elders” are first mentioned in Acts 11:30.

By the time of the Jerusalem Council, elders had assumed a prominent role (15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4). Now, the Jerusalem church is led by elders.

“Elder” rule was thus being established as the NT pattern of church governance. (see: Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim.5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1,5)



**Acts 21:19-20**

Paul gives a detailed report on “all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry”. Paul was not boasting of what he had done...he was giving all the glory and praise to God. And the elders responded in the same way, praising God. However, they also raised an issue of concern and potential conflict with Paul.

**Acts 21:20-26**

Whilst God had been using Paul mightily throughout the provinces of Asia and Greece, there had also been a marvellous move of God in, and around, Jerusalem, with “many thousands” of Jews coming to faith in Christ. On the one hand, this was cause for great praise and joyous celebration. However, on the other hand, there were still some aspects of the Jewish / Gentile divide that were being felt.

**What are the specific concerns that the elders have?**

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**Were the things that the Jewish believers heard based on truth? How do you know?**

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**What did the elders propose to Paul as a way of de-fusing the situation and proving the rumours false?**

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**Was Paul willing to comply with the elder's proposal? What did it mean for him, personally?**

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The fact that the Jewish believers still held on to their "Jewishness" and observed various parts of their Jewish heritage, culture and ceremonial aspects of the law is an important consideration for us today, too. They did not hold on to these things as a means of salvation....they had responded to the gospel and that meant that they knew they were saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

However, their culture and heritage were still a very important part of who they were and they were not about to let go of them. To put it in a modern contextual setting.....

**Do you have to be part of an English-speaking, middle-class culture to be a Christian? In what ways do we force people to accept our culture with our Christ, when they come to church? How has this tension been seen in missionary work over recent years?**

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This controversy had arisen because the Jewish believers had listened to, and accepted, the "fake news", rumours and innuendo about Paul and how he was supposedly telling Jews to forsake their Jewish customs. **Why do people believe lies so easily? Why is telling the truth so important?**

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#### **Acts 21:27-36**

So, Paul went through the process of purification as part of this vow and that brought him to the attention of some old enemies....Judaizers from the province of Asia (perhaps Ephesus?). They recognize him as the cause of much tension in Asia and take the opportunity to stir the crowd up against him. Religious zeal is at a fever pitch and the temple would have been packed with pilgrims because of the Feast of Pentecost.

**What accusations are made against Paul by the angry crowd?**

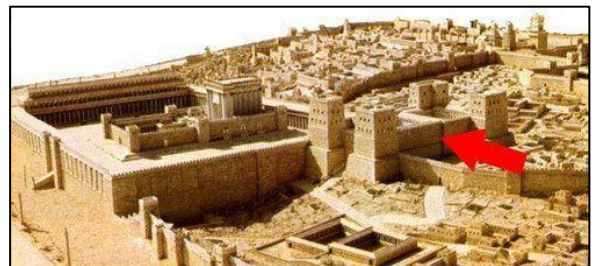
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Paul knew that the punishment for bringing a Gentile into the temple inner court (where only Jews could go) is death. The fact that this accusation against him was wrong (21:29) did not stop the angry mob attacking Paul with the intent to kill him.

**What would this have been like if you were Paul?**

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Luke records that the whole city was in uproar and the noise of the disturbance came to the attention of the commander of the Roman troops in Antonia Fortress (Claudius Lysias, 23:26) who then promptly brought 200 soldiers down and broke up the riot. Lysias arrested Paul, not so much for any wrong doing on his part, but more for his protection whilst he (Lysias) looked into the matter further. As the crowd shouted "Away with him!", Paul was taken into the barracks.



**How does Paul's example of faithfulness to Christ in the face of continuing persecution encourage you in your life and faith?**

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**Religious fanaticism continues today. Why do so many bad things happen in the name of religion?**

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**Why is religious hatred often so intense? What causes this blind devotion?**

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**How can you be praying for someone who gives you a hard time for your Christian faith?**