

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 21, Acts 21-22

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 21 on Acts chapters 21 through 22.

Luke reports Paul's travels in detail, especially during the wee material where he's traveling with Paul.

That would have been significant for an ancient audience. Actually, ancient audiences were very often interested in travel accounts, both in novels and in historical works. And you find it in letters where people are talking about travel here and there.

And this would be especially true among educated urban audiences who had heard of most of these places. They had certain resonances, certain things that they would imagine or think of as they heard of these places. The same as people who read the Old Testament or some parts of the New Testament when they would read about things that happened in the Holy Land.

Well, they were familiar with many of these sites and they would think of the different historical things that happened at these sites. These were helpful associations in their minds. Well, that's true of many of these sites too for Luke's original target audience.

But I'm not going to go into detail on all that because it's interesting for modern audiences, but not as interesting as some other things that we really need to cover. So, I'm just going to mention some of these in passing. He goes by Kos and Rhodes.

These were important Aegean islands. Rhodes had chosen to be on Rome's side from the start and so they got a really good deal from Rome. These places produced major products, costs with wine, and so on.

So, these were very important Aegean islands that they were passing by. And then it says that they passed by Padua, which was a southern Asia Minor port. Easily find a ship traveling from there because of the Alexandrian grain trade.

You know from Rome because of the seasonal winds and so on and the prevailing winds you could sail back from Rome towards Alexandria. But to get from Alexandria to Rome normally you had to sail northward and then cut westward across the Mediterranean. So, the southern Asia Minor port was a major port for the grain trade

between Alexandria and Rome, which was the largest form of trade in the Roman Empire.

Well in 21 verses 3 and 7 it mentions Tyre. And whatever else audiences knew about Tyre, I mean they probably knew that it was destroyed by Alexander the Great. A ramp had been built out to this island kingdom and now Tyre included someplace both in the mainland and then down the ramp into the island itself.

But whatever else Luke's audience may have thought, they at least could have remembered that Luke has mentioned Tyre before. For instance, in Luke chapter 10 verses 13 and 14, it would be better for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for these Galilean towns that weren't repenting. That's significant because here we see that actually some people in Tyre have repented.

There's a strong and growing church there. We saw earlier that Paul spoke in chapter 15 in the churches of Phoenicia, which would include this. In chapter 27 he's actually going to receive hospitality around Sidon, which is also in Phoenicia.

And we know about the sandy beach that's described here and so on. Great place for making glass in antiquity. But also, Tyre was mentioned in chapter 12 verse 20 because they had trouble with Herod the Gripper, the first, who was cutting off some of their food supply from Judea.

But what we have here is different. We don't have a competition between peoples. These are now brothers and sisters in Christ.

This sends a really good message that ethnic strife, ethnic rivalry is not what the kingdom is about. But when we're brothers and sisters, wherever we go, we find brothers and sisters in Christ and we should be able to expect hospitality and grace. In fact, in chapter 27, that's the centurion Julius is marveling.

Normally a centurion has to requisition food. Well, give us food. I'm traveling with this many people.

You have to hand over food. He didn't have to requisition food because just about wherever they went, Paul already had friends there. There were already believers there.

And they were happy to provide hospitality to Paul. And he says, well, this guy is respected in this movement and they're a really nice movement. And it's multi-ethnic.

It's not Judean prejudice against Gentiles like I saw in Judea. It's not any other kind of prejudice. What we see in Acts is what we really should be.

Now, if some of you have visited my country, you know that it's not the most hospitable because the dominant culture, kind of everybody's wrapped up in themselves and they don't always recognize the needs of others that come among them. But you may or may not have experienced hospitality, but probably you wouldn't experience the same hospitality here and in some other Western cultures as in some cultures where I've gone in Asia, Latin America, Africa. People have been so hospitable, so gracious.

I could actually name some who fed me when I was hungry. But in any case, Ptolemaeus, they get to there in verse seven, Ptolemaeus was 30 miles or 48 kilometers past Tyre. We don't even know exactly how they traveled there.

They could have traveled by land. It was just 30 miles. But in any case, he stayed with believers in these places.

That means that the movement had spread. The movement among Gentiles had spread. So, Luke is giving us snippets here and there, but he's also, besides what he gives us in more detail about Paul, just getting these hints about things that aren't narrated, how others have been taking the gospel with them.

Theologically, Paul has helped defend this Gentile Christian movement in Acts 15. So, Peter is a great leader. And James came to the defense of what he was contending for.

But we're also going to see something interesting here about prophecies. In chapter 21 and verse four, they were saying to Paul through the spirit that he should not go to Jerusalem. And yet he knew that he should go to Jerusalem.

Sometimes, even when people are very sensitive to the Spirit, even when people are usually right, sometimes you need to know for yourself just because somebody tells you they feel like the Holy Spirit wants you to do something. There are various, there are some schools where somebody there said, I feel like the Lord wants you to come and teach at our school. And my wife and I had to weigh that and weigh it very carefully.

And I'm not at some of those schools. On the other hand, in the places where the Lord has brought me over the years, normally he's given sufficient confirmation. Although the place where I am now, my wife was the one who heard from the Lord first.

I didn't hear. I wasn't hearing anything, but I said, well, you know if Isaac had listened to Rebekah, it would have saved them a lot of trouble with Jacob and Esau. And so, I

had to move in faith that she was hearing from God in that case, partly because I loved where I was so much that I had such a bias against moving.

But confirmations came afterward in dreams and not after, well, they came before I moved, but after I'd already had to make the decision what I was going to do. There were a number of confirmations that this was going to be the right place for me, at least in the season of my life. Just like Philip, you know, a tenured evangelist, and then he settles in Caesarea.

These people, though, were speaking through the Spirit. Luke says it explicitly. They weren't false prophets.

They weren't wrong in the content of their saying. So how does that balance with what Paul was hearing from God and that Paul was so sure that he was supposed to do this? Well, think of John the Baptist in Luke 7, 18 through 20, where Luke tells us that John heard of the works of Jesus, the most recent one being the raising of the widow of Nain's son. He hears about these marvelous works and he sends them to Jesus and says, are you the expected one or should we be looking for someone else? Why, when he hears about these miracles? Well, remember what John had heard from the Lord.

He's going to baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire. There are no reports of Jesus baptizing anybody in the fire. The kingdom doesn't seem to be showing up yet.

So, Jesus answers him in language from Isaiah 35 and 61, showing that some of the ministry of the kingdom, these healings, and so on, and the good news being preached to the poor, these are a foretaste. I mean, they are part of the kingdom. And so, the foretaste of the kingdom is already there.

John may not live to see its fulfillment, but the thing is John knew part of the word of the Lord. But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, 9, we know in part, we prophesy in part. That covers our teaching and it covers our prophecy.

We may be right in what we know, but that doesn't mean we know everything. We know only part. Think of Elisha, who's staying close to Elisha in 2 Kings 2. And prophets in one town come to him and say, do you know that your master is to be taken from you today? He says, I know, be quiet.

He goes to another town and the sons of the prophets there come to him and they say, do you know that your master is going to be taken from you today? And he says, I know, be quiet. And then Elijah is taken from him in a chariot of fire. And afterward, the sons of the prophets come to Elisha.

They see all the anointing of Elijah on Elisha and they say, well, maybe the spirit of the Lord has carried him away on some mountain or someplace. Let's go look for his body. And Elisha is like, don't look.

And they keep urging him and finally, he says, go ahead and look. And then they look and they come back and they say, we can't find him. He said, didn't I tell you, don't look.

He had a fuller picture than they did. They did hear from the Lord, but they didn't know how Elijah was going to be taken. And that's the way it usually is with us.

That's what's said to Moses, you know, or said about Moses. In Numbers chapter 12, you know, I'll speak with the prophet in a vision or a dream. I'll speak in this way or that way, but I just speak with Moses face to face.

We know in part, we prophesy in part. Someday we'll know as we are known. Someday we'll see face to face.

But in the meantime, we get what we need. And sometimes it can get confusing because we're getting this piece and this piece, but we get what we need to know what we need to know, to do what we need to do. And beyond that, we trust God to order our steps.

What we have in the New Testament, what we have in Acts 16 where Paul's getting this guidance, don't go here, don't go here. He keeps traveling and finally gets a dream. He says, okay, that'll do for now.

We don't understand everything, but we understand enough to know that we need to fulfill our calling. We need to pursue that. And often we'll get more direction along the way.

Paul is being warned about what he's going to face. They were right to hear God's warning he was going to face trouble. And they were right through love, which also comes from the spirit, is the fruit of the spirit.

They did not want him to have to face that. So, they were speaking through the spirit, but Paul had a fuller understanding of what he was called to do. They get to Caesarea, which is on the coast of Judea.

Jerusalemites didn't always call it Judea. That's why you can speak of people, somebody coming from Judea to there. But officially it was the Roman capital of Judea.

And there we find Philip and they lodge with Philip for a while. Philip whom we learned a lot about in Acts chapter 8. Probably Paul and Philip are talking about a lot of things, the past things. And Luke is really paying attention and learning a lot about these past things and the kind of things you read about in Acts 8, at a time when Saul and Philip overlapped.

Saul though was a persecutor. And Philip's four daughters appear here in verse 9. And they are prophetesses or the Greek participle here probably means, although Greek verb tenses, there's a lot of debate about exactly how to take them these days, but probably it indicates that they regularly prophesied, which means they were prophetesses just like Anna in Luke chapter 2. Well, just like you have Simeon and Anna in Luke chapter 2, here you have Philip's four daughters and Agabus is about to show up as a senior-level prophet. Remember what it says in Acts 2:17 and 18, where you have women, your sons and daughters will prophesy on my servants, male and female, I'll pour out my spirit.

Also, he says, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Well, here we have young and old. We have both genders.

I say Agabus was old. He was probably old. At least he was older than he was back in Acts chapter 11, which was a number of years earlier.

So at least he's older than they are. When it speaks of them being virgins, of course, you could be much older and still be a virgin. But normally in antiquity, what that meant, especially in a Jewish context, probably these are in their young teens.

They might be ages 12 to 14 or something like that. So just in case anybody thinks that God can't use young people, here's one of the passages where it's clear that God does use young people. And what were they prophesying about? Well, it doesn't say, but undoubtedly they joined in because it says, after Agabus's prophecy, everybody there, all of us, including Luke, were exhorting Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

It wasn't because he didn't know what was coming. Agabus, like many prophets in the Old Testament, doesn't just speak. He acts it out in a way with his girdle, probably Paul's girdle.

And the wording isn't exactly precise. Like the Jews don't exactly hand Paul over. The Judeans don't exactly hand Paul over to the Romans.

The Romans kind of have to rescue him from the Jews there in Jerusalem. But it's close enough. You have the same kind of thing in some Old Testament prophecies.

And you have other people in the book of Acts putting it that same way as well. I think it's just, that it makes for a nice parallel with Jesus being handed over by Jewish

authorities to Pilate and so on. So, from a literary perspective, on the Lukan level, it's very interesting.

But even on Agabus's level, you have some Old Testament prophecies like that where it's the basic thrust. It's not always the details, although sometimes the details as well. And then we heard this and we were all saying, Paul, please don't go to Jerusalem.

Those who were with him, actually were representatives from various Diaspora churches, most of them probably Gentiles, bringing this collection from the Diaspora churches to Jerusalem. We know that from Paul's letters where he also talks about that in more detail in Acts. You just hear about it in Acts 24:17 and just in passing because it seems not to have been much of an issue by Luke's day.

I could say more about Agabus's prophetic behavior. As you read the Old Testament, you'll see a lot about the nature of the prophets and so on. I just love reading about that.

But there is one difference from the Old Testament. The Old Testament, Kol Amar Adonai, thus says the Lord, in Greek it would be tadelege, thus says. Well, here it's tadelege, thus says, but it doesn't say God.

It doesn't say the Lord. It says, thus says the Holy Spirit. This is what the Holy Spirit says.

You have that in Revelation too, tadelege. And then it's Jesus described in different ways. And then at the end of the paragraphs, it says, if anyone has ears to hear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

So, he is speaking for the Holy Spirit. It's understood that the Spirit is the Spirit of prophecy. And this fits what we've seen about the Spirit bearing witness in every city that Paul is going to suffer.

He goes on his way. They're traveling with Manassin, an old disciple, a disciple who's been around for a long time. And they get to Jerusalem.

Now it's good that they have somebody going with them because now we have a bunch of Gentiles. And the interior of Galilee may have been even more dangerous, but Caesarea, you've got a mixed church. You've got Jewish and Gentile believers.

Going back at least as far as Cornelius, maybe somewhat further with Philip's ministry, we don't know because it's already mentioned him reaching one Gentile, and Luke didn't need to mention anymore. Along the way, along the coastal route,

there will be more cities where there are both Jews and Gentiles. But in Jerusalem, it's going to be primarily Jewish.

So, getting lodging with Manassin is great. Getting lodging with Philip is great. Getting lodging in Jerusalem really sends a message that there are believers there that are willing to host Gentile believers based on the agreements already made in Acts 15.

However, we're going to see that not everybody agrees with that. And Paul wants to bring conciliation between Jewish and Gentile believers and the differences between the Judean church and the churches of the diaspora. So, Paul comes.

Luke doesn't narrate it, but he delivers the collection. Some people think that the Jerusalem church actually rejected the collection, but to reject a gift in antiquity was to declare enmity. That was a very serious act.

And it's very unlikely that the leaders of the Jerusalem church would want to declare enmity against Paul. They say, well, they don't show up at his trial. Well, at the first hearing, they may not have been organized to do it.

And you have to understand that they were under a lot of pressure too. I mean, shortly after Paul leaves Caesarea, or maybe even before he leaves Caesarea, but probably shortly after Paul leaves Caesarea for Rome. No, it's after Paul leaves Caesarea for Rome.

I'm sorry because it's after Festus died. So, within a couple of years after Paul leaves, James, the brother of Jesus, who's the leader of the Jerusalem church, who's very respected in Jerusalem, gets martyred by a high priest. So, they were under a lot of pressure too.

Further, we don't know that they didn't speak on Paul's behalf. We don't know why they didn't send letters on his behalf. They may well have done so.

That's not something that Luke needs to tell us because he already tells us in chapter 21, that James receives him favorably, James and the elders. So, in any case, we're going to read about attempts at conciliation in chapter 21, verses 20 through 26. We know from Romans 15, that Paul's journey to Jerusalem was going to be a mission of reconciliation.

Well, James and the elders receive us, Luke says, Luke was there, and received us hospitably. You know, we greeted them and they received us hospitably. In verse 20, James is explaining to them, well, we have myriadoi, tens of thousands of believers in Judea, which means they way outnumber the Pharisees by now, whom Josephus estimated at about 6,000.

So just massive numbers of believers. They love Jesus. They're also zealous for the law.

That was a good witness within their culture. And after all the law was given by God, it was scripture, even if it wasn't meant for all situations or all times or all peoples or necessarily functioning outside the land. I could go try to explain some more of this, but just to stay within Luke-Acts, just to say, you know, piety toward the law is not a bad thing.

Jesus' parents are portrayed this way. Well, Joseph and Mary are portrayed this way. And Luke chapter 2 is about being pious towards the law.

You have Joseph of Arimathea being portrayed that way. You have Ananias about to be portrayed that way when Paul is speaking in Acts chapter 22 and emphasizing the solidarity of his experience with the community. There was nothing wrong with contextualizing and identifying with the community.

And there was nothing wrong with obeying God's law. It's just the Gentiles weren't required to do so. But in any case, tens of thousands are zealous for the law.

Well, since about 10 or 15 years before, since the time of Agrippa I, Judean nationalism had been growing. We see that also in Josephus. This was leading to greater tensions with Rome.

Also, it was leading to greater tensions because of the misadministration of Roman governors who were sent to this province. It wasn't the, or this part of the Syrian province, it wasn't considered the ideal place to be sent. And it also wasn't, you know, people said these people are hard to get along with.

There were a lot of cultural clashes and the people who were governors there were governors there for political reasons and so on. And we'll see more about why Felix is there in a few moments. But there were rumors about Paul that James mentions or Jakobus mentions, Jacob mentions in 21:21.

And these rumors about Paul are that he's teaching Jewish people in the diaspora not to keep the law. Well, Paul isn't doing any such thing. Remember 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 19 to 23, Paul becomes all things to all people, under the law to those who are under the law.

He becomes Jew to the Jew, which would have been easy for him, Greek to the Greek. Paul isn't against people keeping their own customs. He's against imposing those customs on others.

And James says, you know, we already agreed on that. We agreed on that. But, you know, there were people who didn't like what Paul was doing.

And so, they exaggerated it. You have people who gossip like that today. Hopefully, none of you have ever done that.

But taking somebody's position and reducing it to the absurd or expanding on it in ways that they haven't actually said, you think this is what they mean, or this is where it could go. Sometimes it could go that way. You want to make sure it doesn't, but it's good to talk with them.

In any case, when Caesar wasn't in Rome, his enemies, and his rivals in Rome spread rumors about him, nasty rumors. When Paul was not in Jerusalem, his enemies spread rumors about him. And we see that also in Paul's writings, Romans 3.8, people who say, let us do good that evil may come, that Paul is teaching something like that.

Or 2 Corinthians 6.8, you know, by good report and evil report. Some people speak evil about us. Well, so the way that Paul is asked to show that he's not against Jewish people keeping the Torah is that he's asked to support some Nazarites who are under a vow, which means Paul's going to go into the temple.

He's going to pay for sacrifice. And Paul has no problem with this because he's not against Jewish people keeping Jewish customs. He's just against imposing Jewish customs on others.

The same way that a missionary could go, say, if you were from France or Russia or let's, let me think of a, say you're a missionary from China and you are ministering in Zimbabwe and, you know, you've gone as a business person, but you're a missionary. You don't want to impose Chinese customs on people in Zimbabwe. You're trying to reach them where they're at.

But when you go back to China, you're also not going to try to impose local Shona customs or other Zimbabwean customs on your people in China. It's like God works with people in a cultural context. We have cultural contexts.

So, Paul identifies with his people. He doesn't have a problem making this sacrifice. The temple is still standing.

It may be under judgment, but it hasn't been judged yet. But here we have a riot. Some Jews from Asia, it says.

Well, the leading city in Asia was, in the Roman province of Asia, Ephesus. Remember, Paul had split their synagogue back in chapter 19, verses 8 and 9. And so

they accused Paul of having brought Greeks into the temple and started shouting about this. Now there was a basis for their accusation, but it wasn't adequate in this case.

They had recognized Trophimus, an Ephesian Gentile, as part of Paul's group. He had come with Paul and they said, oh, that's a Gentile. And they'd seen Paul in town with him.

Well, now Paul's in the temple. And so, they assumed that Paul took Trophimus into the temple. Luke reports it as a false accusation.

Paul did no such thing. However, people sometimes extrapolate from limited evidence. And that's what was done in this case.

They accused Paul of having taken Trophimus into the temple. And the people who heard them responded. There's a reason why the accusers don't show up later in any of the trials.

For one thing, they went back to Ephesus. But for another thing, it wouldn't even be good for them to leave notarized documents saying what they saw, because there will be too many witnesses otherwise that Trophimus was somewhere else instead of there. Well, the church in the Ephesus area later on, will understand why Paul wrote to them from Roman custody, because Paul's going to get in trouble at this point.

Trophimus was from Ephesus. The accusers were from Ephesus. We're just going to get back to Ephesus, why Paul's in trouble.

They could have expected as much because Paul had already talked about expecting trouble, even in Romans 15:31. He's expecting some trouble when he gets to Judea. Well, at this point, I want to digress and talk a little bit about Paul's teaching, about building one new temple in Christ.

Probably because of teachings like this, believers in Ephesus and Paul's enemies in Ephesus already knew that he looked for a greater temple. But then in doing so, Paul was not unlike many other Jewish people who spoke of a new temple coming. I mean, there was even a regular prayer, praying for God to restore the temple, probably before the temple was destroyed, looking for God to do something greater.

First Enoch talks about the restoration of the temple. The Qumran community, they were looking for a new temple. They recognized that the old temple had been desecrated by a corrupt senior priesthood.

In any case, Paul is going to talk about this more in a letter to the Ephesians. Not just Ephesus, but again, probably a circular letter with Ephesus being the dominant location. So, circular letter in Asia Minor.

But Paul, in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11 through 22, talks about building one new temple in Christ. The passage emphasizes Gentiles being welcomed into God's people, which isn't surprising for Paul. I mean, in Romans, he emphasizes how Jews and Gentiles come together in the same terms.

In Galatians chapter 2, he challenges Peter publicly at what, in my cultural context, we might have called a segregated lunch counter. Jew and Gentile eat separately. Paul challenges that as antithetical to the gospel, inimical to the gospel.

And Jesus had also spoken of a new temple better than that of Jewish and Samaritan holy sites. In John chapter 4, he talked about judgment on the old temple. He talked about being the cornerstone of a new holy place and so on.

In fact, in Mark chapter 11, one of the reasons for judgment on the temple seems to have been, you know, this house was to be a house of prayer for all the nations. Luke leaves out all the nations because he's emphasizing the other part about judgment probably. But in any case, the Old Testament temple didn't segregate Gentiles from Jews.

The innermost court was for the Lord alone. Next was the sanctuary for priests, but then there was no division outside of that. Outside of that was the outer court.

Everybody was welcome in the outer court. Solomon in 1 Kings chapter 8 prays for Gentiles to feel welcome in that outer court, the same as Israelites. But due to purity regulations that priests had developed, Herod's temple segregated Jews from Gentiles.

The outer court now was divided into the Court of Israel for Jewish men, and outside that on a lower level, the Court of Women for Jewish women who were considered less clean than the Jewish men. And outside that on yet a lower level was the new outer court beyond which Gentiles couldn't go. Nice welcome signs informed the Gentiles, that if they go past this point, they will be responsible for their own death, which will shortly ensue.

Josephus mentions those signs. They've also been found. One has been found by some archeologists in the temple area a long time ago.

So, in Acts 21, some Ephesian Jews, saw Paul exiting from the temple. They remember, okay, he split our synagogue. He was also the occasion for a riot in Ephesus that they got blamed for.

Now they've seen him in Jerusalem with Trophimus, an Ephesian Gentile. So, they start a riot, not Paul, but his accusers start a riot, accusing Paul of having brought this Gentile past that dividing wall in the temple. And Paul, well, Paul is being beaten.

And the Roman fortress Antonia was there on the temple mount. It overlooked the court of the Gentiles. So, they're always having sentries looking out, especially in this period, because Felix was a terrible administrator.

There were all sorts of assassinations taking place in his day. So, they see what's happening and soldiers run down. It says centurions run down.

We don't know if all the soldiers were ready to run down at that point, but two of the officers take a lot of soldiers with them and they rescue Paul, but they don't think they're rescuing him. They think they're going to, they think they've captured somebody. And the Judean beaters of Paul are actually, they've captured one of these assassins that really nobody likes except the revolutionaries.

Well, Paul asks to preach to them. He's probably not in his healthiest mode at this point after being beaten, but I have kept preaching when I was being beaten. But Paul preached to them.

He preached in Aramaic. He found plenty of common cultural ground. They listened nicely to his testimony about Jesus.

Things were no longer the way that they'd been in Acts chapter two. Paul had been trying to get there in time for Pentecost. And so, this is something like Paul's Pentecost sermon, probably not on the exact day of Pentecost, like Acts two, or the exact feast of Pentecost.

But in any case, this is the equivalent of Paul's Pentecost sermon. And people are much more open to hearing about Jesus now. I mean, you have this indigenous church, this massive movement of believers in Jesus who are well-known and liked by many of their peers.

They keep the law. The Pharisees appreciate them because of that. But despite Paul giving all this common ground, Paul doesn't just end up preaching Jesus.

Paul says, and the Lord sent me from this place saying, go to the Gentiles. Well, that confirms the suspicions of some of them that this man has something to do with Gentiles, or maybe he even did take a Gentile into the temple with him. Now, the nice thing about speaking in Aramaic is that his Ephesian Jewish accusers would only know Greek and they could not understand what he was saying.

The unfortunate thing, however, was that the Chiliarch, the Roman tribune who was in charge, also didn't understand what he was speaking and also didn't know that he was actually pointing towards reconciliation, ethnic reconciliation. They think he's stirring up the riot. But no matter what, Paul doesn't leave out his call to the Gentiles.

Well, why? Why was this so controversial? Precisely because things were very polarized by this point. It was only a few years before the outbreak of the Judean-Roman War. Because Rome has been treating Judea so badly in recent years, and because nationalism has been on the rise, people are getting more and more polarized.

And when they get polarized, what do they do? Leaders of each, if they want to stay in charge, they want to stay popular, they tell their own side exactly what they want to hear, and they get more and more polarized over time. You can see that sociologically in politics and elsewhere in different places. In any case, but Paul can't leave that out.

Because for Paul, if you're really a lover of Jesus, you have to love your brother and sister who is in Christ. If you can't love across ethnic lines, don't call yourself a lover of Jesus. We have to be able to love across ethnic lines.

And if you don't have a lot of believers on the other side of the ethnic line, well, let's start winning some. Let's start sharing the love of Christ with them. So the riot started up again, and Paul ended up in Roman custody.

And so, when Paul writes to the Ephesians and to the area around Ephesus, he writes most likely from Roman custody. Well, he writes from Roman custody, most likely from Rome. He was held for two years in Caesarea, then shifted off to Rome.

The believers in Ephesus would know why Paul was in Roman custody. Trophimus was from Ephesus. Paul's accusers, who undoubtedly would be happy to speak against him in Ephesus too, were also from Ephesus.

So, they knew why Paul was writing to them from Roman custody. And that's why for Paul and for his first audience, there could be no greater symbol of the division between Jew and Gentile than this dividing wall in the temple. And that's why in Ephesians chapter two, Paul declares that this dividing wall of partition has been shattered by Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:14, he himself is our peace, maybe echoing the language of Micah. He himself is our peace who has made the two one, both Jew and Gentile one in context, and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, which was, he goes on to say it was based on purity regulations, which this dividing wall was by the

priests. Now this was in the day before it was popular in any circles to discuss ethnic reconciliation.

Paul's running around declaring things like in Galatians 3:28, in Christ Jesus, there's neither Jew nor Gentile. He didn't mean culturally, but before God, all of us come to God in the same way. A few years later, just a few years after he left Caesarea, Jews, and Syrians were massacring each other in the streets of Caesarea.

Josephus tells us that in something like one hour, very quickly, 18,000 Jews were massacred in Caesarea. Philip and his four daughters, we hear that they and many of the other Jewish believers in Jesus had left and they settled in the area around Ephesus. A decade later, Rome destroyed Jerusalem's temple and enslaved its survivors within a decade of when Paul was writing that.

In Ephesians 2, though, Paul goes on to speak of a new temple. In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you also are being built up together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

Well, coming back to Acts chapter 21, Paul is dragged into the outer court of the temple, and the gates are shut. Why? They want to avoid desecrating the temple with his blood. They want to kill him.

They want to beat him to death, but they don't want to desecrate the temple. You're not supposed to have people killed in the temple, which actually is supposed to be a sanctuary, a place of refuge. Beating him, well, and probably the Levite guards want to participate in this too.

The one automatic death penalty that Rome granted in Judea was if somebody violated the sanctity of the temple, they could be put to death. Interestingly, Paul was not a Gentile going into the temple. He was Jewish, but he was accused of having taken a Gentile, but the Gentile is nowhere to be found.

Ironically, Rome's soldiers inadvertently rescue Paul, something for which the Tribune is later happy to take credit, but he didn't know what he was doing at the time. But they inadvertently rescue Paul. We mentioned how the fortress Antonia overlooked the outer court.

Archaeology and Josephus show us that there were stairs leading from the fortress Antonia down into the outer court. And so, when it mentions the soldiers running down the stairs, this was a very wide stairway. You didn't have to run down single file.

And the crowd was confused here, just like the crowd in Acts chapter 19. The mob didn't really have time to get all the information. That's why when the Tribune is wanting to figure out exactly what Paul has done because he doesn't know, he's heard different things from the crowd.

Some think Paul is that Egyptian false prophet that Josephus talks about. Some think that he's one of the Sicarii, the assassins, that Josephus also talks about. What the Sicarii did was they were called Sicarii because they kept daggers, using a Latin word for this certain kind of dagger, they kept them under their cloak.

And they would go into the temple, not in secret. They would go in publicly when it was very crowded. And they would work their way to some aristocrats in the temple because they knew that the aristocrats were in league with Rome, at least the older aristocrats were.

And they would pull out the dagger from under the cloak, leave the dagger in the aristocrat, and start crying out, oh no, look what happened. And nobody would know who did it, not because it wasn't crowded, but because it was so crowded, nobody knew who stuck the dagger in him. And so, he's thinking, well, maybe one of these assassins has been captured.

Or if it's that Egyptian false prophet that got away, we disperse the crowds. But if it's this prophet, he knows this is going to be good for his career. So, in any case, he's talking with Paul before Paul gives the speech.

And he says, oh, you know Greek? So, you're not that Egyptian prophet who led people out in the wilderness a while ago. Egyptian Jews spoke Greek, but it wasn't like good Greek, like the kind of Greek that Greeks from the northern Mediterranean normally spoke. You might think of Parisian French.

My wife, when she was doing her master's and doctoral work in France, she spoke perfect Parisian French. Congolese French is French, but she spoke perfect Parisian French, which was the most respected in Paris. So that there were some people, you know, she'd call in on the phone for a temporary job to help support herself while she was going to school.

And they'd say, oh yeah, come in for the job. And she'd get there and they would say, oh, you're black. We don't hire blacks here.

But they didn't know that she was from Africa because she spoke perfect Parisian French. Now other places didn't discriminate like that, but from then on when she'd call, she'd say, hi, I'm Medine. I'm African.

I'm black. Just so she wouldn't have to waste her time on bus fare going somewhere if, you know, they wouldn't hire Africans. But in any case, she spoke perfect Parisian French.

In English, you might think of British English. You know, I'm an American. We speak, from the British standard, we speak kind of a corrupted English.

It might be closer in Kenya and Nigeria and other places than the way we speak it here in America. But in any case, you know, we all have our accents. But Paul had developed the ability to speak Greek with an Aegean accent, maybe even by this point an Athenian accent.

The Attic accent was considered the purest form of Greek. But in any case, Paul has spent time in Greece. He speaks good Greek.

And Claudius Lysias is impressed, who happens to be a Greek himself, even though he's a Tribune. So, you know, he says, so you're not this Egyptian? You're not one of the Sicarii who led a group into the wilderness? Well, there were a lot of messianic movements in the wilderness. That's where you could draw crowds without Roman intervention, although there was Roman intervention when they got too close to Jerusalem because people were expecting a new exodus in the wilderness.

That's even in Luke chapter 3, quoting Isaiah chapter 40 in verse 3, prepare a way in the wilderness for our God. People were expecting a new exodus in the wilderness. Hosea 2, Hosea 11, Isaiah 11, Isaiah, and later on in Isaiah as well.

So, it turns out he's not from there. He says, no, I'm actually a citizen of Tarsus, a city of no insignificant city. Well, civic pride was a big thing, probably even bigger in the early second century.

You had a lot of civic rivalry, but civic pride was a big thing. And, you know, for Paul to be a citizen of Tarsus was no small thing. It wasn't as big as being a Roman citizen, but that's not the issue now.

The issue now is how did he get to have such good Greek? So, he says, I'm a citizen of Tarsus. Well, it's true. That's where he was born, even though he may have been brought up in Jerusalem, this will stress to his next audience.

And, you know, he takes what he has and makes it useful. But, you know, speaking the truth, bilingualism, Paul is able to, you know, he says, can I speak to the crowd? And so the tribune thinks, oh, he's going to calm down this crowd even more. So Paul begins to speak.

They've already been somewhat silenced, but now they get even quieter as they see that he's allowed by the tribune to speak. And once he starts speaking in Aramaic, they get really quiet because they say, oh, this is probably not somebody who's going to be pro-Gentile or at least trying to ruin our culture or play down our culture. So not only does he speak good Greek, he speaks Aramaic.

His Aramaic may have been a bit rusty, but, you know, he was born in Tarsus, but he was reared in Jerusalem probably early enough that he learned not just Greek, but he learned Aramaic. Often if you have a child growing up in more than one place or a child of parents from one culture, but they grew up in another culture, the children can grow up bilingual if they're hearing both. And that seems to be the case here with Paul.

He was born in Tarsus, he says, but brought up in Jerusalem, 22-3. Tarsus, as we said before, was a university center, but many Tarsians did their advanced study, their tertiary study abroad. Paul actually probably did more than his tertiary study in Jerusalem, however.

His advanced study was clearly in Scripture, the Greek form of Scripture, Septuagint. But he says, I was born in Tarsus, but I was brought up. And usually, when you have those words together in Greek literature, it means that he spent more of his youth in Jerusalem.

So that's why he's got Aramaic. He said that he was educated. This is the third stage.

He was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. Some translations don't put it quite that way, but literally, it's at the feet of Gamaliel. Mishnah Abot 1-1, that was the appropriate posture for a disciple.

You were to be sitting in the dust at a teacher's feet. That's also the proper posture for a disciple back in Luke 10-39. There's a reason why it's controversial that Mary, the sister of Martha, is sitting at Jesus' feet in that passage, because normally women were not disciples.

It was an unusual and extraordinary kind of situation. So, she's sitting at Jesus' feet, taking the posture of a disciple. Well, here Paul is at the feet of Gamaliel.

He's learning from him. Ironically, he didn't learn from him the most important thing that Gamaliel taught, which is, to let these men alone. If God is with them, you don't want to find yourself fighting against God, which Paul does find himself fighting against God, kicking against the goads, and ending up having to turn.

And that illusion will be highlighted later on in Acts 26, which I probably won't talk about it there, so sometimes I'll talk about things elsewhere when I'm going to cover

something in less detail. But King Agrippa and Festus, who were educated with Greek education, would certainly catch the illusion from Euripides. But in any case, proper posture for a disciple.

Gamaliel was the most elite Pharisee, probably among all of them. And it's said that the household of Gamaliel offered training in Greek, as well as in the Hebrew classics, the scriptures. So, it's not surprising that Paul could have learned in Greek, there in Jerusalem, about the Torah, which would be the best place to learn about the Torah.

Probably his whole family had moved to Jerusalem. That's probably why he can speak of being a son of Pharisees, because his family probably became Pharisees in Jerusalem, most likely. Could have carried over from somewhere else, but most likely in Jerusalem.

That's where we mostly know of Pharisees. And also, his nephew was there. So, unless his sister was sent there for an education, probably not.

Probably the whole family had moved there. But in any case, so he grew up in Jerusalem and then was educated at the tertiary level under Gamaliel. And he says I was zealous for the law.

Well, that can be a good thing, to be zealous for God's Word. But it was increasingly becoming used in a particular way, because by the time you have the outbreak of the war against Rome, one of the groups of revolutionaries is called the Zealots, those who are zealous. And they took as their model, the Maccabees, who were zealous for the law.

And the Maccabees model was Phinehas, who was zealous for the law. Well, how? Phinehas atoned for the people and brought an end to the plague as one of the chief priests. He was not the chief priest yet in the Old Testament sense, Rosh HaKohen, but he was part of the chief priestly family.

He was the son of Aaron. He went and he speared through the most obvious couple who were openly committing sin and stayed the plague. And the psalmist actually says, using the same language we have for Abraham and Genesis, that it was counted to him as righteousness.

Well, Saul had used that model beforehand of what would be counted to him as righteousness. He was zealous for the law, he goes on to say, by arresting Christians. When he mentions it in Acts 26, he's going to mention that he did it with the full knowledge and the commission of the high priests, which is the same group that's now accusing him.

They had been in with him on this illegal activity that would be viewed as illegal from a Roman standpoint. So, Paul gives this message and then he talks about going to the Gentiles. His vision of the temple of Jesus says, go to the Gentiles.

And the riot erupts again. People are throwing off their cloaks, maybe similar to what we talked about with Stephen. They're throwing dust into the air.

They don't have any rocks maybe to throw, but they throw their dust into the air. They better not throw any rocks with the soldiers standing near them anyway, because they might retaliate and have been known to retaliate earlier in this previous generation. So, they're rioting, they're saying, away with such a man, it's not fit for him to live.

Using language from Luke chapter 23, where the crowds cry about Jesus, away with him, crucify this man. So, Stephen spoke about the temple. He got killed.

Paul has spoken about the temple and God used the Romans to intervene and spare his life. Probably a lot of people were praying for him with all these prophecies. And also, actually before his conversion, the Bible says, pray for those who persecute you.

Probably a lot of people prayed for him back then too. But anyway, the final quarter of Acts addresses Paul in custody. Why is this final quarter of Acts so detailed? Well, one thing, Luke is present as a witness.

Another is it's gotten apologetic for Paul that climaxes Luke-Acts, the final quarter of Acts. Chains in custody were shameful. So, here's Paul, the father, we might say in today's language, the father of the Gentile mission.

So, any guilt associated with Paul reflects on the diaspora churches and on the mission to the Gentiles. Already in Philippians chapter one and 2 Timothy chapter one, some wanted to dissociate from Paul because of his chains. So, this is an issue that Luke has to address.

Acts is written partly, I'm not saying this is the only reason for Acts, but Acts is written partly to vindicate Paul. That is, just like Jesus in the narrative about the crucifixion, just like Jesus. Pilate said I find no guilt in this man.

Herod Antipas says I find no guilt in this man. And you have the parallel between Jesus there and Paul here. Those who were really in charge of finding guilt didn't find any.

Paul was not really guilty. He was condemned for political reasons, not for legal reasons, also not for lack of common sense. Going to Jerusalem might've been dangerous.

Why does Paul go? Luke doesn't even mention the collection, but Paul goes because of divine necessity. Again, that was an argument, a standard argument in ancient rhetoric. If you said, God told me or a God told me to go, that was considered usually a pretty good argument.

Well, you had to do this because you were told and Paul is very certain of that. And it wasn't that God was blindsided. The prophecies clearly show that that was going to happen.

Paul wasn't blindsided. He knew it was coming, but he knew God was leading him there. And it also fits what we see in Paul's letters because Paul does say in Romans 15, that he expects trouble in Judea.

And next, we hear from him, he's in Roman custody. So, in any case, what's the point for us? Because most of us already like Paul. For those of us who already like Paul, this final quarter of Acts, the thrust of the final quarter of Acts shows us the value of legal, historical, and other kinds of apologetic.

It is important to be able to answer people's objections when possible. It doesn't mean they'll necessarily agree with us, but it's important for us to be able to answer their objections and to make our case a solid case. Well, Paul is in Roman custody and now they decide that they want to interrogate the Tribune, the Chiliarch.

Normally he's the one who's in command of the entire Roman cohort there in the Fortress Antonia. The Tribune says I've got to find out why Paul was accused like this. Why is everybody so upset with him, this man? So, we're going to interrogate him and they are going to interrogate him under torture, *coercitio*.

Paul is chained and they're about to beat him. And he says, is it lawful to beat a Roman citizen? Well, it wasn't even lawful to put him in chains without a trial. So, they've already gone too far.

Maybe Paul waited that far on purpose, but the beating, could be very severe. And the centurion in this case goes to the Tribune and says, are you aware this man's a Roman citizen? He does the Tribune a favor because the Tribune could have gotten in a lot of trouble for doing this. Now, not necessarily.

He might have gotten away with it if nobody complained. But if somebody did complain, governors often got away with things, but their subordinates, the Tribunes, often didn't. There was another governor who was recalled earlier, but his Tribune, who had carried out his orders in response to the complaints of the Judean people to pacify, to satisfy them politically, that man was drawn and quartered and dragged through the streets of Jerusalem.

He was killed. So, the Tribune does have some reasons to be concerned that he's not mistreating a Roman citizen in the wrong way. I mean, the whole reason that Rome had to approve all capital punishment and carry out capital punishment in the provinces was to make sure that nobody mistreated Roman citizens for their loyalty to Rome.

And so, the Tribune comes to Paul, and he wants to see how much trouble he's in already maybe damage control. This was suggested by Cadbury a long time ago, and it's been followed by many, including myself. He comes to Paul, and he says, well, I acquired my citizenship.

He said, first, are you a Roman citizen? Yes. Well, I acquired my citizenship with a large sum. It cost him a lot.

There were different ways to acquire Roman citizenship. One was to be born to Roman parents, as Paul was. Another was as a reward to groups or individuals, often municipal officers.

Another was military service, which Jews wouldn't normally do. Another was manumission. Well, that was the most common next to being born to Roman parents.

Paul's ancestors probably had become Roman citizens that way. And another was a bribe. Well, that's what Lysias did.

He paid money for his citizenship. That was very common early in Claudius's reign, but as more and more people got it, and that's why he has the name Claudius Lysias because you would take the name of your benefactor. Lysias was his given name.

He's Greek, but Claudius Lysias is his Roman citizen name. It got cheaper over time, though, as more and more people had the franchise. Lysias hopes that Paul got his cheaply.

Instead, Paul uses a phrase, that actually it echoes a Latin phrase, but it's given in Greek. I was born a citizen. And the tribune realizes, okay, well, I need to help Paul.

I need to treat him a bit differently. And I need to make sure that if I've done any damage, it gets undone and Paul likes me. But we're going to need to find out what these charges are about, not by a mob, but by the experts.

I'm going to have to call together this Sanhedrin to get their expertise. And that will be where we pick up in the next session, where we're going to find another mob scene.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 21 on Acts chapters 21 through 22.