

BIBLE STUDY

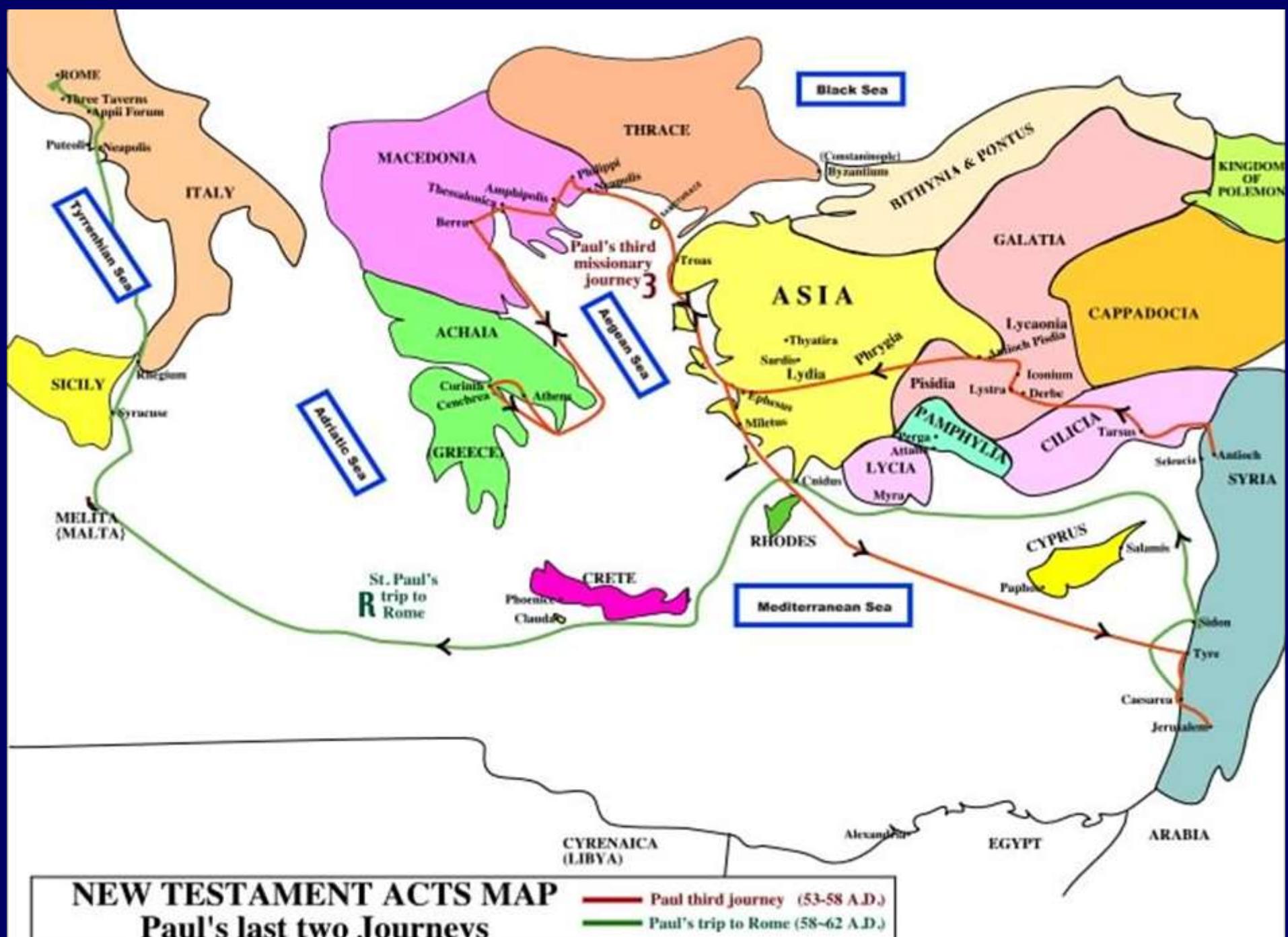
**Acts 21:1-17 to 23:30;
Paul's Last Visit to Jerusalem.**

Acts 21:17-40;

Paul in Jerusalem.







NEW TESTAMENT ACTS MAP
Paul's last two Journeys

— Paul third journey (53-58 A.D.)
— Paul's trip to Rome (58-62 A.D.)

Acts 21:17; “When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly.”

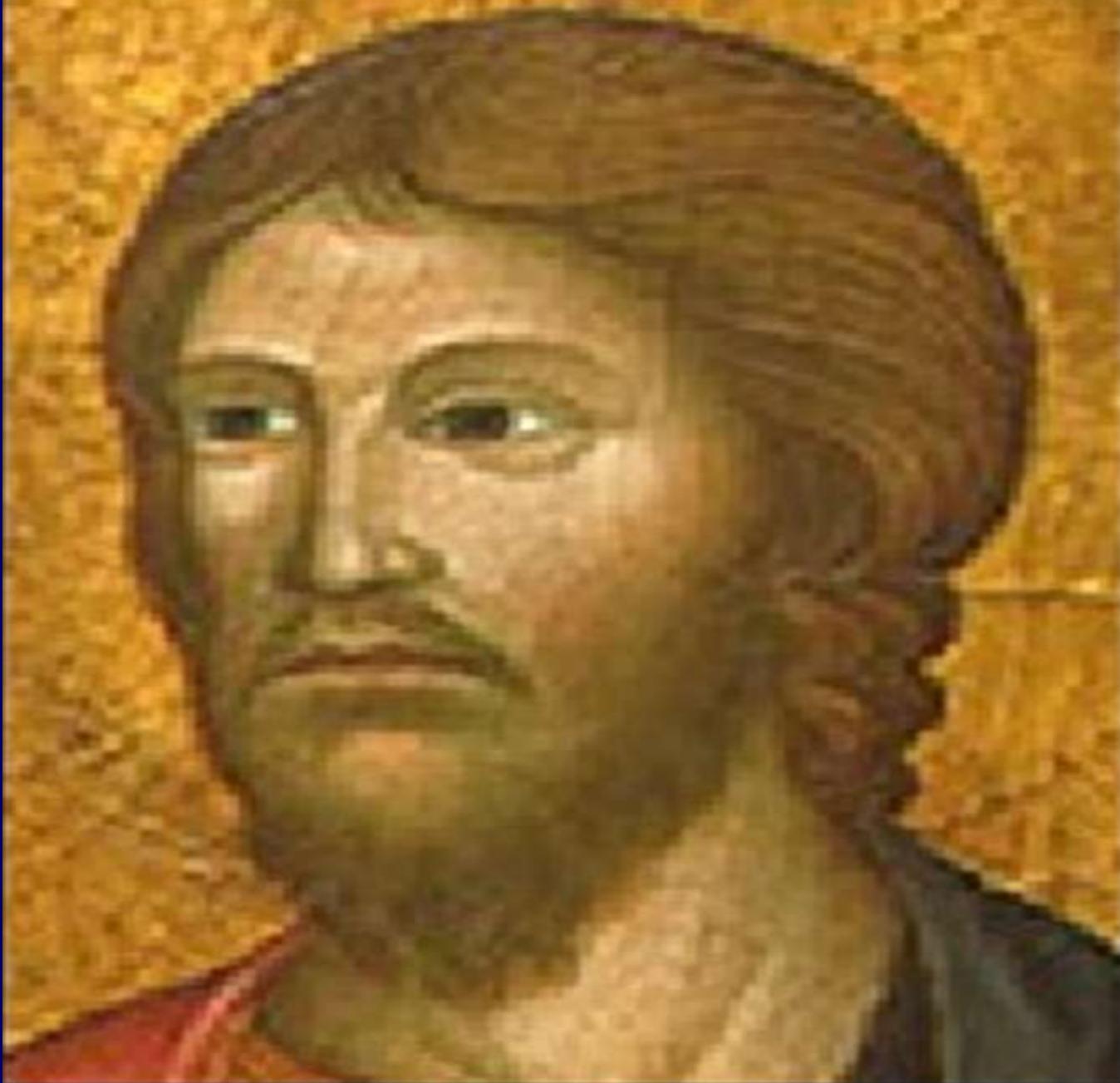
**Paul has really completed
his third missionary journey at this point.**

**With the help of those sent by (apostles from) the
Gentile congregations he has brought their gift
for the poor among the Jewish saints in Judea.**

**We will see in this section Paul acts
on the advice of James the Lord’s brother
to disprove the accusations of the Jews
that he is a traitor to his nation.**

**However, he is attacked by them, then rescued
and protected by the Romans in their barracks.
But he also gets to tell his story to the crowd.**





James the Just brother of Jesus

Acts 21:17; “*When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly.*
18 *The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James,
and all the elders were present.*”

This James was the half brother of Jesus and the brother of Jude who wrote the New Testament book called by his name.
(Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3;)

James the Lord’s brother was not an apostle.
He is mentioned here simply as **a spiritually minded individual** that Paul met (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13;) (**James became a pillar in the congregation.**)

Paul does not say James was an apostle
in the sense that the 12 were apostles.

In Gal 1:19; is one of those times where the Greek word **apostolos** is used in the generic meaning,
that is, “**one that is sent.**”

*Acts 21:17; “When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly.
18 The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James,
and all the elders were present.”*

*The congregations sent out men in the 1st century.
These evangelists, like James, were thus referred
to as apostles (See At 14:14; 2 Co 8:23; Ph 2:25).*

**They were not Christ-sent apostles. These
Congregation-sent apostles did not have the power
of the Christ-sent apostles. (See 2 Cor 12:12;)**

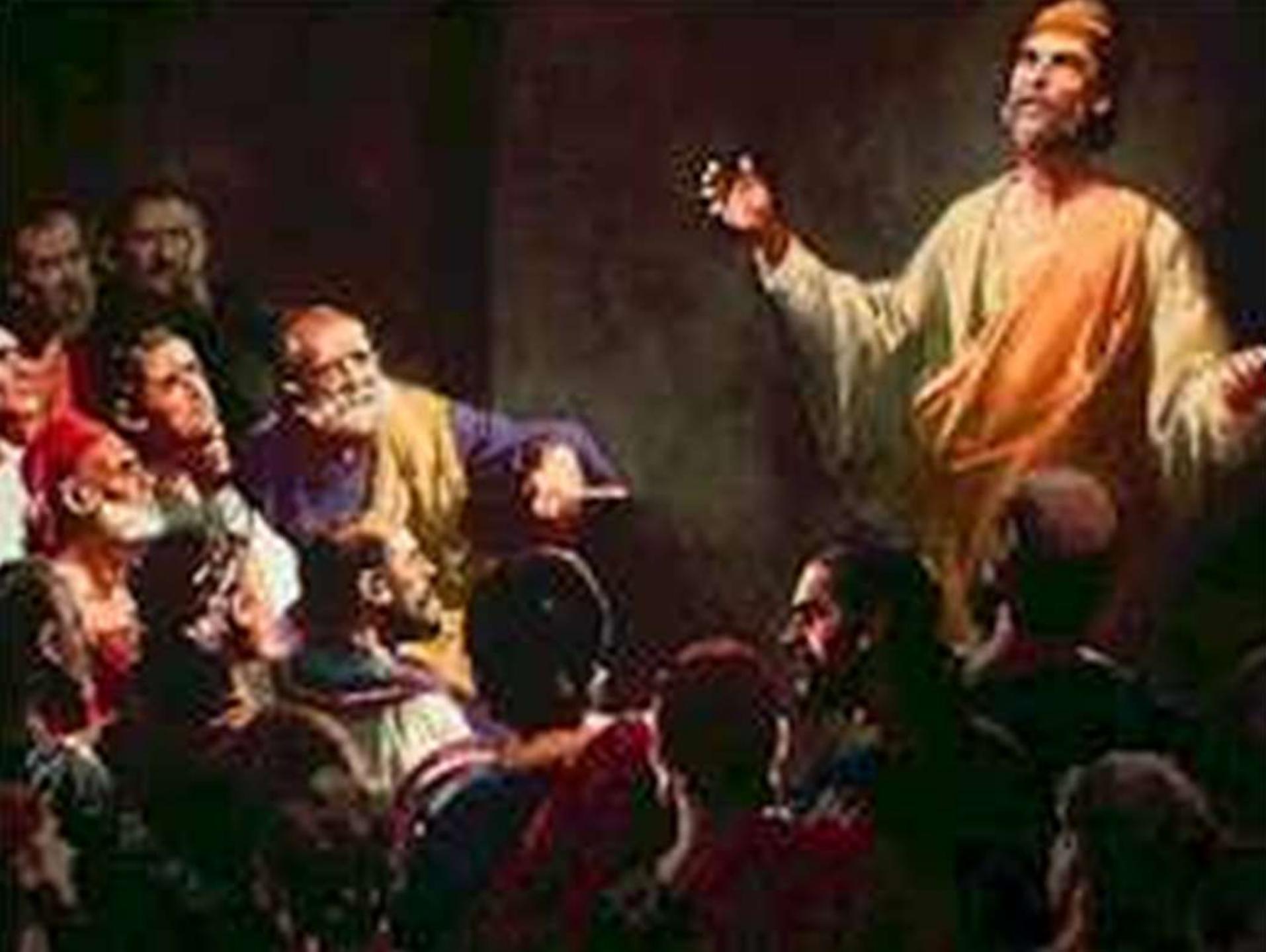
**However, because they were sent out by
the congregation to preach the gospel they were
referred to as apostles, or those who were sent.**

**You can see the quality of James
as an individual with great spiritual ability
when you read the book of James.**

Acts 21:18; “*The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.*”

“all the elders were present” Their presence seems to imply that a special meeting had been arranged with James and all these leaders from the various congregations in Jerusalem.

Once before, when **alms** were brought to Jerusalem they were **entrusted to the elders for distribution among the needy.** (Acts 11:30.)



Acts 21:19; “Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”

Paul gave to James, the elders and whoever else was there, a full report of all God had accomplish through him since the last time they had seen him.

They were happy for all God had done among the Gentiles through Paul.

But as we shall see, they warned him about the Jews, even the believing Jews, and how they felt about him.

They considered him a traitor to their nation.

Notice Paul emphasized that God had done the work. God was working through Paul.



Acts 21:19; “Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”

Paul would have told how many Gentiles had forsaken their idols and were living faithful to God, even to the point where attendance at idols' temples had greatly fallen off.

He would have explained out how the **gratitude of those Gentiles** had led them to undertake a **generous contribution** for the brethren at Jerusalem.

Paul would have introduced the messengers of the congregations who had carried the offering.

Perhaps he told about the **individual congregations they represented** as he introduced each man.

Acts 21:20; “*When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.”*

Their praises to God also show that they were in full agreement with Paul and his teaching and practice among the Gentiles.

“they said to him” As we saw at Acts 19:21; the offering was **an attempt by Paul to heal the breach between the Jewish and Gentile Christians.**

There was an animosity toward Jews that Christian **faith and love** had helped the Gentile Christians to overcome;

There was also a **deep-seated animosity toward any Gentile** on the part of the Jews, and they too needed to practice some **Christian faith and love.**

Acts 21:20; “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.”

Many Jewish Christians were still observing some parts of the Law of Moses, in particular, the sacrifices, the distinctions of meats and days, the hours of prayer, and the feasts.

It may seem surprising that these Christians should continue to observe the Mosaic rites (since the Law was abolished, nailed to the cross,)

Colossians 2:14; but we are to remember:-

The Mosaic Law was ordained by God, and the Jews had been trained all their lives, before becoming Christians, in the observance of its statutes; there was nothing sinful in them.

People are slow to give up old, traditional way of doing things, even when they know a better way.
Zealousness for the Law had become almost a national characteristic among the Jews.

Acts 21:21; “They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.”

*Someone had deliberately been spreading these **false teachings** about Paul among the Jewish community of believers. Gossip rumour are still favourite ways to destroy those who take a stand for truth right.*

***They Heard that
Paul Taught Three Things:***

- 1) That the Jews should forsake Moses.**
- 2) They should not circumcise their children.**
- 3) They should not walk according to the customs.**



Acts 21:21; “They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.”

We must remember that the laws of Moses

were not just religious laws

but also *civil laws for the nation of Israel.*

Many of the believing Jews believed they
Should continue to circumcise their male children
and observe all the Jewish festivals
and other customs of their culture.

Paul believed Jews could continue
to observe these things too, although
he believed **they had nothing to do with salvation**
or one's relationship with God.

Had Paul himself not observed
the law of **the Nazarite oath?**

Acts 21:21; “They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.”

Acts 15:1; “Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them.”

“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.

To those not having the law I became like one not having the law.” 1 Cor 9:19-22;



Acts 21:21; “They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.”

Paul took a firm stand that Gentiles were not required to observe the Jewish law and were not required to be circumcised. (Galatians 2:1-5;)

He had refused to allow Titus, whose father and mother were both Greeks, to be circumcised.

He did have Timothy circumcised because his mother was a Jew, though his father was a Greek. (Acts 16:1-3; so that the preaching of the gospel would not be hindered among the Jews.)

For a Jew, circumcision has nothing to do with salvation but it is something that makes a Jew culturally a Jew in the thinking of the Jewish community.

Acts 21:22-25;

**22 “What is to be done? A crowd is sure to gather,
for they will hear that you have come,
So this is what we suggest that you should do;
There are four men with us who have made a vow.”**

**24 “Take these men, join in their purification rites
and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads
shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth
in these reports about you, but that
you yourself are living in obedience to the law.”**

**25 “As for the Gentile Christians, we aren't asking them
to follow these Jewish customs at all - except for the ones
we wrote to them about: not to eat food offered to idols,
not to eat unbled meat from strangled animals,
and not commit any kind of sexual sin.”**

The Izmel



**Jewish
Knife for
Circumcision**

Acts 21:22-23; “What is to be done? A crowd is sure to gather, for they will hear that you have come, So this is what we suggest that you should do; we have four men here who are under a vow;”

James suggested that Paul

go with the four Jewish men, who, like him, were completing the period of their Nazarite vows and were offering the sacrifices for their purification.

The reason for this is that this would help him to **blend in** and not be noticed so much.

But we know it did not work.

Paul was recognized and a riot ensued.

The accusations were **false** because Paul never taught Jews not to circumcise their sons.

NAZIRITE VOW

nazir meaning
“consecrated”
or “separated”



Acts 21:22-23; “What is to be done? A crowd is sure to gather, for they will hear that you have come, So this is what we suggest that you should do; we have four men here who are under a vow;”

These four, as a comparison of what is said of them here with the law of the Nazirite clearly shows, were under a Nazirite vow.

Numbers 6:19; “After the Nazirite has shaved off the hair of his dedication, the priest is to place in his hands a boiled shoulder of the ram . . .”

Numbers 6:9; “If someone dies suddenly in his presence, thus defiling the hair he has dedicated, he must shave his head on the day of his cleansing-the seventh day.”

The indication given here in Acts is that these men who had this vow had become unclean (accidentally touching a dead body would be one way a man could become unclean) before the termination of the time included in the vow.

25 “As for the Gentile Christians, we aren’t asking them to follow these Jewish customs at all - except for the ones we wrote to them about: not to eat food offered to idols, not to eat unbled meat from strangled animals, and not commit any kind of sexual sin.”

**What cultural things do we do in religion today
because it is expected of us
rather than commanded of us?**

**How much should we consider culture
in keeping peace among believers
and in reaching out to the lost?**



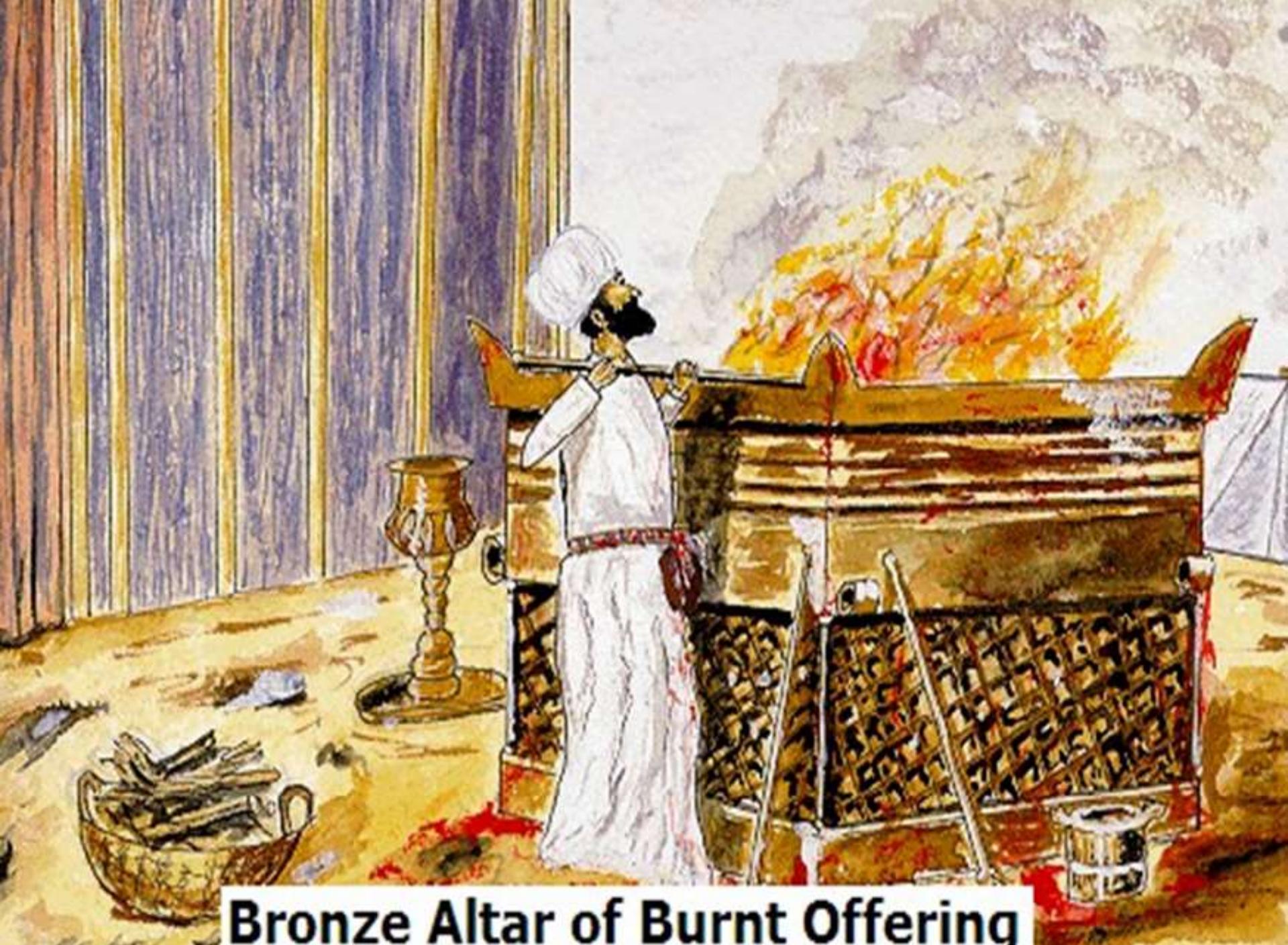
Acts 21:25; “As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.”

This had been the decision the Apostles and elders had made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Jerusalem conference as recorded in Acts 15.

The day after Paul talked to James and the elders he went to the temple to give to the priest the notice of the date when the seven days of purification would end and when the offering could be made.

It was on one of the seven days of the purification ritual that **some Jews from the province of Asia recognized him and told the crowd.**

This started an uproar, the crowd tried to kill him. But as we will see, he is rescued by a Roman officer.



Bronze Altar of Burnt Offering

Acts 21:27-28; “When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, "Men of Israel, help us!"

“This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place.

And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place.”

29 “(They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area.)”

None of the accusations made by the mob were true. But these kinds of false accusations are easily made by people whose only desire is to harm their enemies by whatever means they can.

Acts 21:26; “The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.”

Lying about the prophets, Jesus, the Apostles and other Christian leaders has never been a problem for the persecutors of God’s leaders.

Paul would never have dared bring Gentiles into the temple area.

That would have brought certain death to them.

A warning inscription that had been posted in this area has been found by archaeologists, threatening death to any Gentile who would cross the line into the holy precincts of the temple.

Warning to Gentiles not to enter the Court of Israel.



Acts 21:26; “The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.”

The translation of the sign is as follows:-

**NO FOREIGNER
IS TO GO BEYOND THE BALUSTRADE
AND THE PLAZA OF THE TEMPLE ZONE.
WHOEVER IS CAUGHT DOING SO
WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME
FOR HIS DEATH
WHICH WILL FOLLOW.**



J. L. N.

Acts 21:30; “The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar.”

This mob uproar was similar to what had happened in Ephesus. Most of the people involved in the uproar didn't know what was going on. They just wanted to be part of the excitement.

Jesus had said these people were like **sheep without a shepherd**. The whole flock of sheep will run to follow any sheep that looks as if he knows where he is going.

When they find out the sheep did not know where to go, they would wait for the next such indication, then they would be off and running again.

Our generation is no different.



32 “He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd.

When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

33 “The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains.

Then he asked who he was and what he had done.”

34 “Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks.”



35 "Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers.

**36 The crowd that followed kept shouting,
"Away with him!"**

**37 "As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander,
"May I say something to you?"**

"Do you speak Greek?" he replied. 38 "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists out into the desert some time ago?"



Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus

Acts 21:38; "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists out into the desert some time ago?"

This Egyptian was probably a Jew from Alexandria or some other city in Egypt.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells of such a person. In his Antiquities of the Jews, book 20, chapter 8, section 6 and in Wars of the Jews, book 2, chapter 13, section 5.

According to Josephus he came to Jerusalem and led a rebellion against the Romans in the city. But Felix, the governor sent the army against him. Many of his followers were killed and captured but he escaped.



39 “Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."

40 “Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd.

**When they were all silent,
he said to them in Aramaic:”**

Paul had spoken to the commander in Greek.

**Now he speaks to the crowd
in the Hebrew dialect (Aramaic).**



Conclusion.

Thus fulfilled the prophecies of Agabus and others. Paul begins his period of imprisonment that will lead to his voyage to Rome

He will appear in the Court of Caesar,
Exercising the right of appeal
that belonged to every Roman citizen.

If it were not for the fact that
Paul was a Roman citizen and under
the protection of Rome, he would be dead now.

Jesus did not have the civil rights that Paul had.

Acts 21:17-40; Paul in Jerusalem.

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**Next in the series:-
Acts 22:1-20; Paul's Defence to Jews.**