

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 183 – July 2nd – Acts 21:17-36

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Acts

Bruce, FF, *The Acts of the Apostles*, London, 2nd ed. 1952

Polhill, John B, *Acts: The New American Commentary*, Nashville, 1992

Stott, John R W, *The Message of Acts*, IVP (The Bible Speaks Today), Leicester, 1990

Verse 17

Γενομένων δὲ ἡμῶν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἀσμένως ἀπεδέξαντο ἡμᾶς οἱ ἀδελφοί.

ἀσμενως adv gladly, warmly
ἀποδεχομαι welcome, receive

Verse 18

τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ εἰσῆει ὁ Παῦλος σὺν ἡμῖν πρὸς Ἰάκωβον, πάντες τε παρεγένοντο οἱ πρεσβύτεροι.

ἐπιουσα, ης f the next day
εἰσῆει Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 s εἰσεμι
enter, go in
παραγινομαι come; aor. be present
πρεσβυτερος, α, ον elder

It would seem that none of the Twelve were in Jerusalem at this time.

Verse 19

καὶ ἀσπασάμενος αὐτοὺς ἐξηγεῖτο καθ' ἓν ἕκαστον ὃν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν διὰ τῆς διακονίας αὐτοῦ.

ἀσπασομαι greet, welcome
ἐξηγεομαι tell, relate, report
εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one
ἕκαστος, ης, ον each, every

καθ' ἓν ἕκαστον lit 'according to each single thing' i.e. in detail

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ουσ n nation, people; τα ἑ. Gentiles

διακονια, ας f ministry

Cf. 14:27; 15:3f., 12.

Verse 20

οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐδόξαζον τὸν θεόν, εἰπόν τε αὐτῷ· Θεωρεῖς, ἀδελφέ, πόσαι μυριάδες εἰσὶν ἐν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τῶν πεπιστευκότων, καὶ πάντες ζηλωταὶ τοῦ νόμου ὑπάρχουσιν·

δοξαζω praise, honour, glorify, exalt

"They had cause to praise God not only for the conversion of the Gentiles, but also for the practical evidence of their conversion in the contribution sent to the Jerusalem Christians, perhaps also for the relief felt at learning that the report of v.21 was untrue." Bruce

Yet it is also evident that the success of Paul's mission created problems for the church at Jerusalem.

θεωρεω see, observe, notice
ποσος, ης, ον how much(?), how many(?)
μυριας, αδος f group of ten thousand, myriad, countless thousands
πεπιστευκότων Verb, perf act ptc, gen pl
πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)
ζηλωτης, ους m one who is zealous
υπαρχω be (equivalent to εἰμι)

These were probably converts from among the Pharisees. Cf. Gal 1:14.

Verse 21

κατηχήθησαν δὲ περὶ σοῦ ὅτι ἀποστασίαν διδάσκεις ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως τοὺς κατὰ τὰ ἔθνη πάντας Ἰουδαίους, λέγων μὴ περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς τὰ τέκνα μηδὲ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν περιπατεῖν.

κατηχεω inform, instruct
ἀποστασια, ας f apostasy, rebellion
διδασκω teach

τοὺς κατὰ τὰ ἔθνη πάντας Ἰουδαίους 'all the Jews who live among the Gentiles'.

"Neither in Acts, nor in his epistles is it suggested that Paul encouraged Jewish believers to give up their ancestral observances; indeed, he himself honoured them. But he did insist that these observances must not be imposed upon Gentile believers, that they were not necessary to salvation, and that a man was no worse a Christian for omitting them (cf. Rom 14:5f)." Bruce

"Still, there may have been a grain of truth in the rumour that Paul was encouraging Jews of the Diaspora to abandon the Torah. It would not have been Paul's having actually urged the Jews to do so but rather the social situation of Paul's Diaspora churches. In the Diaspora, Jews who became Christians would almost inevitably have transferred from the synagogue to the predominantly Gentile churches. Acts 19:9 would indicate that this had been the case at Ephesus. Having left the base of support for their Jewish identity in the synagogue, there would be the natural inclination to the ways of the Gentile majority in the Christian churches. Whether or not this was the case, Paul himself had not urged Jewish Christians to abandon the Torah, and there is no evidence that the elders themselves lent any credence to the allegations. Still, they had to deal with them." Polhill

περιτεμνω circumcise
 τεκνον, ου n child
 μηδε negative particle nor, and not
 ἔθος, ους n custom, practice
 περιπατεω walk, live; here = observe

Verse 22

τί οὖν ἐστίν; πάντως ἀκούσονται ὅτι ἐλήλυθας.

τι οὖν ἐστίν 'what about it then'

παντως surely, certainly
 ἀκούσονται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 pl
 ἀκουω
 ἐλήλυθας Verb, perf act indic, 2 s ἔρχομαι

Verse 23

τοῦτο οὖν ποίησον ὃ σοι λέγομεν· εἰσὶν ἡμῖν ἄνδρες τέσσαρες εὐχὴν ἔχοντες ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν.

ἄνηρ, ἄνδρος m man
 τέσσαρες neut τέσσαρα gen τεσσαρων four
 εὐχη, ης f vow, oath

"The vow seems to have been a temporary Nazirite one, like that in 18:18. Cf. Numb 6:2ff. Such a temporary vow commonly lasted 30 days ... In Paul's readiness to undertake this charge, we have a further example of his self-confessed willingness to be 'all things to all men' (cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23)." Bruce

Verse 24

τούτους παραλαβὼν ἀγνίσθητι σὺν αὐτοῖς καὶ δαπάνησον ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἵνα ζυρήσονται τὴν κεφαλὴν, καὶ γνώσονται πάντες ὅτι ὢν κατήχνηται περὶ σοῦ οὐδέν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ στοιχεῖς καὶ αὐτὸς φυλάσσω τὸν νόμον.

παραλαμβανω take, receive, accept
 ἀγνίσθητι Verb, aor pass imperat, 2 s ἀγνίζω
 purify, cleanse

Polhill suggests that "Paul was the one who underwent purification. Often a Jew returning to the Holy Land after a sojourn in Gentile territory would undergo ritual purification. The period involved was seven days (cf. Num 19:12), which fits the present picture (v.27). Paul thus underwent ritual purification to qualify for participation in the completion ceremony of the four Nazirites which took place within the sacred precincts of the temple. This would be a thorough demonstration of his full loyalty to the Torah, not only in his bearing the heavy expenses of the vow but also in his undergoing the necessary purification himself."

δαπαναω spend
 ζυρήσονται Verb, aor midd dep subj, 3 pl
 ζυραομαι shave, have oneself shaved
 κεφαλη, ης f head
 γνωρίζω make known, disclose, know
 κατήχνηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 pl
 κατηχεω v. 21
 οὐδεις, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν no one, nothing
 στοιχεω walk, conduct oneself

Used ethically, like περιπατεω of v.21.

φυλασσω keep, guard, defend

Verse 25

περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκῶτων ἔθνῶν ἡμεῖς ἀπεστείλαμεν κρίναντες φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τὸ τε εἰδωλόθυτον καὶ αἷμα καὶ πνικτὸν καὶ πορνεῖαν.

πεπιστευκῶτων v.20.
 ἐπεστείλαμεν Verb, aor act indic, 1 pl
 ἐπιστελλω write, instruct by letter

Many mss (including B) read ἀπεστείλαμεν 'we sent' rather than, 'we wrote'. For the letter, cf. 15:23f.

φυλασσω v. 24.
 εἰδωλοθυτον, ου n meat offered to idols
 αἷμα, ατος f blood
 πνικτος, η, ον strangled (of animals killed for food without draining the blood)
 πορνεια, ας f sexual immorality

There are a variety of textual readings here concerning the content of the prohibition as in 15:20, 29.

"James and the elders say in effect, 'We are glad to know that you do not teach Jewish believers to forsake the law, and we should like you to make clear to all the Jewish believers here. As for the Gentile believers, of course, we have already agreed that nothing is to be required of them except that they refrain from meat sacrificed to idols, etc.'" Bruce

"As Jewish nationalism increased, the Gentile mission became more and more of a liability to Jewish Christianity. In the aftermath of the Jewish war with Rome and the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, Jewish Christianity was declared heretical by official Judaism; and it was no longer possible for a Christian Jew to remain in the Jewish community. James had seen the problem well and sought to present himself as a strict, Torah-abiding Jew, doubtless to strengthen the credibility of his witness to his fellow Jews. Ultimately, he gave his life for his Christian witness, being put to death at the order of the high priest Annas in AD 62." Polhill

Verse 26

τότε ὁ Παῦλος παραλαβὼν τοὺς ἄνδρας, τῇ ἐχομένῃ ἡμέρᾳ σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀγνισθεὶς εἰσήει εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, διαγγέλλων τὴν ἐκπλήρωσιν τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ ἀγνισμοῦ ἕως οὗ προσηγήθη ὑπὲρ ἑνὸς ἐκάστου αὐτῶν ἢ προσφορά.

τοτε then, at that time

παραλαμβανω v.24

ἐχομένη Verb, pres midd ptc, f dat s έχω;
midd ptc = next

ἀγνισθεὶς Verb, aor pass ptc, m nom s ἀγνίζω
v.24.

εἰσήει Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 s εἰσεμι
enter, go in

ἱερον, ου n temple, temple precincts

διαγγελλω proclaim; here = give notice of
ἐκπληρωσις, εως f completion, end

The time fixed for fulfilment.

ἀγνισμος, ου m purification (ritual)

ἕως οὗ when

προσηγήθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s

προσφερω offer, present

ἑνος ἐκάστου each one

προσφορα, ας f offering, sacrifice

"The offering consisted of one he-lamb, one ewe-lamb, one ram, and accompanying meal and drink offerings, according to Num 6:14f." Bruce

Verse 27

Ὡς δὲ ἔμελλον αἱ ἑπτὰ ἡμέραι συντελεῖσθαι, οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι θεασάμενοι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ συνέχεον πάντα τὸν ὄχλον καὶ ἐπέβαλον ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας,

μελλω be going, be about

ἑπτα seven

συντελεῖσθαι Verb, pres pass infin συντελεω
end, complete, finish

Bruce suggests that the following events took place at the beginning of the seven days. Polhill thinks they were at the end of the seven days of Paul's cleansing.

On Jews from Asia, cf. 20:19. "Not surprisingly the opposition to Paul came from Asian Jews, probably some from Ephesus. Paul had spent three years in Ephesus and part of the time in their synagogue (19:8). They knew him well. In his Miletus address Paul alluded to plots the Ephesian Jews had already directed against him. Often Diaspora Jews were exceedingly strict in their observance of Jewish ritual (cf. 6:9), and it may have been some of these same Asian Jews who had spread the rumours about Paul throughout Jerusalem (cf. v.21)." Polhill

θεασάμενοι Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom

πl θεαομαι see, observe

ἱερον, ου n temple, temple precincts

συνέχεον Verb, imperf act indic, 1 s & 3 pl

συγχεω confound or bewilder, stir up

Cf. 19:32.

ὄχλος, ου m crowd, multitude

ἐπιβαλλω lay (hands) on

χειρ, χειρος f hand, power

Verse 28

κράζοντες· Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλίται, βοηθεῖτε· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ κατὰ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ τόπου τούτου πάντας πανταχῇ διδάσκων, ἔτι τε καὶ Ἑλληνας εἰσήγαγεν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν καὶ κεκοίωκεν τὸν ἅγιον τόπον τούτον.

κράζω cry out, call out

βοηθεω help

λαος, ου m people, a people

τοπος, ου m place

πανταχη adv everywhere

διδασκω teach

Cf. 6:13

ἔτι still, yet, moreover

τε και and also

Ἑλλην, ηνος m a Greek, non-Jew

εἰσήγαγεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s εἰσαγω

bring into, lead into

κοινωω defile, make unclean

Gentiles were not permitted beyond the outer court of the Temple.

Verse 29

ἦσαν γὰρ προεωρακότες Τρόφιμον τὸν Ἐφέσιον ἐν τῇ πόλει σὺν αὐτῷ, ὃν ἐνόμιζον ὅτι εἰς τὸ ἱερόν εἰσήγαγεν ὁ Παῦλος.

Cf. 20:4.

προορω see previously

νομίζω think, suppose, assume

"It was an instance of sheer irony. In the temple for his own purification, Paul was accused of having defiled it." Polhill

Verse 30

ἐκινήθη τε ἡ πόλις ὅλη καὶ ἐγένετο συνδρομὴ τοῦ λαοῦ, καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενοι τοῦ Παύλου εἶλκον αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ ἱεροῦ, καὶ εὐθέως ἐκλείσθησαν αἱ θύραι.

ἐκινήθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s κινεω
move, shake

ἐγένετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s γινομαι
συνδρομη, ης f rushing together

Here alone in the NT.

ἐπιλαμβανομαι take hold of, sieze

εἶλκον Verb, imperf act indic, 1 s & 3 pl
ἐλκω draw, drag

κλειω shut, shut up, lock

θυρα, ας f door, gate

Verse 31

ζητούντων τε αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι ἀνέβη φάσις τῷ χιλιάρχῳ τῆς σπειρῆς ὅτι ὅλη συγχύννεται Ἱερουσαλήμ,

ζητεω seek, look for, attempt

ἀποκτεῖναι Verb, aor act infin ἀποκτεινω kill,
put to death

ἀνέβη Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀναβαινω go
up, come up

φασις, εως f news, report

"It was probably sent up by the soldiers who patrolled the top of the colonnade to watch for riots." Bruce

χιλιάρχος, ου m commander (a high ranking military officer generally in charge of 600-1000 men), high ranking officer
σπειρα, ης f cohort (tenth part of a Roman legion having about 600 men), band of soldiers

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire
συγγεω and συγχυννω v. 27

Verse 32

ὃς ἐξαυτῆς παραλαβὼν στρατιώτας καὶ ἑκατοντάρχας κατέδραμεν ἐπ' αὐτούς, οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες τὸν χιλιάρχον καὶ τοὺς στρατιώτας ἐπαύσαντο τύπτοντες τὸν Παῦλον.

ἐξαυτης adv immediately, at once
παραλαμβανω take

στρατιωτης, ου m soldier

ἑκατονταρχης, ου m centurion

"As more than one centurion was present, we may infer that at least 200 men were called out." Bruce

κατέδραμεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s
κατατρεχω run down

ἰδόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ὁραω
see, recognise

παυω stop; midd stop, cease

τυπτω beat, strike

Verse 33

τότε ἐγγίσας ὁ χιλιάρχος ἐπελάβετο αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκέλευσε δεθῆναι ἀλύσει δυοί, καὶ ἐπυθάνετο τίς εἶη καὶ τί ἐστὶν πεποιηκώς.

τοτε then, at that time

ἐγγίσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s ἐγγιζω
approach, draw near

ἐπιλαμβανομαι take, take hold of, arrest
κελευω order, command

δεθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin δεω bind, tie
ἀλυσις, εως f chain, imprisonment

δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two

Probably to two soldiers, one on each side.

πυθανομαι inquire, ask, question

τίς εἶη "Optative in historical sequence (cf. Lk 1:29; 8:9; 18:36; 22:23). Luke is the only NT writer to use this classical construction." Bruce

πεποιηκώς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s ποιεω

Verse 34

ἄλλοι δὲ ἄλλο τι ἐπεφώνουν ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ· μὴ δυναμένου δὲ αὐτοῦ γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλὲς διὰ τὸν θόρυβον ἐκέλευσεν ἄγεσθαι αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν παρεμβολήν.

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

ἄλλοι δὲ ἄλλο τι ἐπεφώνουν 'different people shouted different things'

ἐπιφωνεω shout, cry out

ὄχλος, ου m crowd, multitude

γνῶναι Verb, aor act infin γινωσκω

ἀσφαλῆς, ες definite; the facts

γνῶναι τὸ ἀσφαλὲς 'learn the truth'.

θορυβος, ου m confusion, disturbance

κελευω v. 33

παραμβολη, ης f barracks; camp; army

Verse 35

ὅτε δὲ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀναβαθμούς, συνέβη βαστάζεσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν στρατιωτῶν διὰ τὴν βίαν τοῦ ὄχλου,

ὅτε conj when

ἀναβαθμος, ου m (flight of) steps

συνέβη Aorist act indic, 3 s συμβαινω
happen, come about

βασταζω carry, bear

στρατιωτης, ου m soldier

βια, ας f force, violence, use of force

Verse 36

ἡκολούθει γὰρ τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ λαοῦ κράζοντες· Αἶρε αὐτόν.

ἀκολουθεω follow, accompany

πληθος, ους n crowd, multitude

λαος, ου m people

κραζω cry out, call out

αἶρω take, take away

αἶρε αὐτον 'take him away' cf. 22:22; Lk 23:18; Jn 19:15.