

Jerusalem: roots, fellowship, and costly return

Why does Paul keep returning to Jerusalem?

Jerusalem connects Paul's story with the earliest apostolic community, debates about Gentile inclusion, relief for believers, and his arrest. It is a place of deep attachment and real conflict, not merely the mission's opponent or a discarded stage of Christianity.

Connection without a simple itinerary

Galatians describes Paul visiting Cephas and James and later presenting his gospel to recognized leaders. Acts narrates several Jerusalem visits. Scholars differ over how those accounts align, especially the visit in Galatians 2. Preserve each account before proposing a harmonization. Paul affirms his divine calling while also describing concrete fellowship and shared concern for the poor.

Biblical references: Galatians 1:18-24 · Galatians 2:1-10 · Acts 9:26-30 · Acts 15:1-35

Sources: letters, acts, chronology

A collection expressing solidarity

Paul's collection for Jerusalem gives practical form to unity between Gentile churches and Jewish believers. Romans explains the Gentiles' indebtedness in spiritual blessings; the Corinthian correspondence discusses generosity, preparation, and accountability. These texts make poverty and material assistance central to the relationship. The collection should not be reduced to a travel clue or imagined as purchasing recognition for Paul's mission.

Biblical references: Romans 15:25-31 · 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 · 2 Corinthians 8:1-24 · 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

Sources: letters

An arrest with named causes

Acts describes accusations, a crowd, and Roman intervention during Paul's final narrated visit. A suspicion about Trophimus contributes to the crisis, but the narrative does not say Paul brought him into the temple. Avoid blaming Jewish people collectively: Paul, the Jerusalem believers, and many other participants are themselves Jews. Faithful witness requires telling the conflict precisely while refusing inherited hostility toward an entire people.

Biblical references: Acts 21:17-36

Sources: acts

Sources

- [letters] Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section. <https://ebible.org/web/>
- [acts] Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section. <https://ebible.org/web/ACT.htm>
- [chronology] Pauline Letters chronology: Acts, the letters, dated external anchors, and explicitly qualified reconstructions. <https://paulineletters.com/explore/timeline>

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